MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

50c
APRIL
PDC

MIKE SHAYNE
is at his Hardest–Hitting best in
MURDER IS MY ACCOMPLICE
A NEW Short Novel by
BRETT HALLIDAY

JACK "LEGS" DIAMOND:
THE COBRA OF THE UNDERWORLD
Another incredible
TRUE CRIME Story
by DAVID MAZROFF

also...
RICHARD DEMING
JONATHAN CRAIG
BILL PRONZINI
DAN ROSS
JAMES McKIMMEY

24 ISSUES – TWO YEARS' READING – ONLY $8

For the Greatest Bargain of Your Crime-Reading Life
Get a Big Two Year Subscription To

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

•

THE COLORFULLY illustrated *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine* is the only publication where you can read a brand new, especially written Mike Shayne story in every issue. And the Mike Shayne stories you read appear there first, and in many instances are never reprinted in paperbacks or in any other form. You *may* miss some of the Redhead's most interesting cases altogether if you don't read *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine* regularly.

WE DECIDED ON this unusual bargain subscription offer because so many readers keep telling us it's difficult to locate their favorite magazine on the present over-crowded newsstands. So—subscribe immediately—and you won't have to go searching for Mike Shayne. He'll come to you 24 consecutive months. Every issue contains a new complete, dramatically suspenseful Mike Shayne adventure.

SUBSCRIBE NOW . . . RE-SUBSCRIBE NOW . . . for the biggest bargain of your crime-reading life. Two years—24 issues—3168 pleasure-packed exciting pages—yours for only $8.00, in United States currency, please. Kindly remit an additional dollar ($1.00) for Canada, Mexico, Pan American countries and all foreign countries.

RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
56 West 45th Street, New York, New York. 10036

Kindly enter my subscription to **MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE** for two years (24 issues) @ $8.00. Add $1.00 for foreign postage.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY, STATE, ZIP NO. .....

Please print **APRIL—228**

MIKE SHAYNE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

APRIL, 1969 VOL. 24, NO. 5

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

MURDER IS MY ACCOMPLICE

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Much of good she had seen . . . a lot more that was evil. She had learned only too well that all things have their price—including Murder. Could Mike Shayne free her from the ticket to hell she carried? One bloody night would tell . . .

. . . . . 2 to 51

NEW TRUE CRIME FEATURE

JACK "LEGS" DIAMOND: COBRA OF THE UNDERWORLD
DAVID MAZROFF 74

SIX NEW SHORT STORIES

RUNNERS IN THE PARK
JAMES McKIMMEY 52

MURDER IN THE NIGHT
DAN ROSS 66

HOWDY
RICHARD DEMING 102

WELCOME TO THE CLUB
JACK RITCHIE 116

HELLBOUND
JONATHAN CRAIG 120

RETIREMENT
BILL PRONZINI 125

LEO MARGULIES
Publisher

CYLVIA KLEINMAN
Editorial Director

HOLMES TAYLOR
Associate Editor

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Vol. 24, No. 5, April, 1969. Published monthly by RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC., 56 W. 45th St., N. Y. 10036. Subscriptions, One Year (12 issues) $6.00; Two Years (24 issues) $12.00; single copies 50¢. Second-class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and at additional mailing offices. Places and characters in this magazine are wholly fictitious.

© 1969, by RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American copyright conventions. Printed in the United States of America.

Postmaster—return 3579 to 56 W. 45th Street, New York, New York. 10036.

MURDER IS MY ACCOMPLICE

by BRETT HALLIDAY

A lost lady who was a loser . . . a killer who knew the price of Murder . . . somehow Mike Shayne must find and break the evil chain that was sending them both to hell.

THE NIGHT WAS DARK over Miami Beach, and in the small, private office building just off Collins Avenue the offices and corridors were as silent as an Egyptian tomb. Nothing moved in the parking lot, a dark hole in the noise and revelry of Collins Avenue, where the hotels blazed with expensive light.

Then, at almost precisely ten o'clock, a figure emerged from the shadows of the parking lot. The figure was small and slender and dressed all in black. A man, young. The man stood for a time near the office building.

The man was listening, watching.

Seemingly satisfied, he moved again toward the building. At a point along the dark rear wall he

© 1969, by Brett Halliday

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

The New MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel

opened a black bag he carried, and took out a length of stout nylon rope. A hook was attached to one end of the rope.

The man looked around once more, carefully, then threw the hook upward to where a small casement window was open. On the fourth attempt the hook caught on the window sill and set solid. The man put on a rubber mask.

The man in black swarmed up the rope like a cat, reached up for the window, and hauled himself through and in. He pulled the rope up after him. Inside the building he stood in a small bathroom. He crossed it lightly and tried the door. It was unlocked.

Smiling to himself and carrying his black bag, he slipped silently out of the bathroom and stood in an elegant private office that had a large, polished desk.

Filing cabinets lined two walls. Two expensive modern couches rested against the other two walls and two mammoth arm chairs filled the rest of the room around a glass-topped coffee table.

The masked intruder paid no attention to any of this. He went straight to a large painting on the left wall above a couch. He touched the painting and swung it out on its hinges. A round safe was set in the wall behind.

The man bent to his black bag, took out an electric drill, fitted a bit into the drill, plugged the drill into a wall socket, and began to drill the safe. He worked steadily and in silence.

The drill made almost no noise. Wreaths of smoke rose from the bit, and the man oiled it from time to time. Finally he had four small holes spaced around the combination lock.

He returned the drill and bit to his bag, set four tiny charges in the holes, backed off a few feet, and set off the charges with an electric impulse. The four explosions were no more than pops.

The man went to the safe and swung the door open. He reached in and scooped the contents of the safe out and into the black bag.

It was the work of seconds, once the safe was open. The man closed the bag, and crossed the office to the outer door. He went out through the larger outer office and reception room, instead of through the bathroom as he had entered.

He was almost to the outer door when he heard footsteps and voices in the corridor beyond, hearty voices that broke the silence like a sudden blow.

The masked man stopped just at the door.

He listened.

The footsteps stopped; the voices were just outside the door.

A key grated in the lock.

The masked man jumped silently, lightly behind where the door would open.

The door opened and two men

came into the office. They came in fast, unaware of anything unusual, talking as they came. One was tall, well-dressed, with wavy blond hair combed to perfection. The other was shorter, heavier, with a florid face. The second man was not quite as well-dressed, and was doing most of the talking.

The masked intruder stepped out from behind the door just as the florid-faced man reached the open door to the inner office. The intruder's grotesque rubber mask was a macabre sight. The two men heard him and whirled.

"What the hell—" the florid man cried.

A pistol had appeared in the masked man's hand. He covered the two men and backed toward the open door into the corridor.

The tall, wavy-blond man paled and stared speechless. The heavier florid man was made of tougher stuff. He lunged at the masked gunman.

The man in the grotesque mask stepped quickly aside, and clubbed the heavy pistol down on the skull of the florid man, hit once, and again. The florid man collapsed in a heap. The gunman looked once more at the tall, blond man who cowered away.

Then the gunman was gone.

On the floor the florid man groaned. The blond man blinked a few times, said, quaveringly, "Frank? Frank, what—"

Then he seemed to realize that

Frank was not going to answer right away, and he would have to do something himself. He stared around as if not at all sure what to do. Then an idea seemed to sink through his wavy hair. He went to the telephone.

"Police," he said, his voice high and thin. He gulped, tried to get the voice down to its natural imposing baritone. "Police—get me the police!"

II

MICHAEL SHAYNE drove in the sunny morning across the causeway into Miami Beach. It was just after 9:00; he had barely had his coffee. Lucy Hamilton had been waiting with the message when he had come in.

"A Mr. Frank Candia called, Michael. He said it was urgent and he had to see you in his office. He can't come to our office

because he's still talking to the police. A robbery."

"Who is he, Angel?" Shayne asked. Lucy Hamilton always ran a check on any potential client who called on the telephone only.

"I looked him up," Lucy said, and read from her notes. "Frank J. Candia, attorney, mostly estates and trusts. Some of the best widows in Miami Beach let him run their affairs while they sail to far places. He's a native Miamian, once had a criminal practice, was an assistant county attorney briefly some years ago. He's married, two children, lives high."

"Okay, Angel, I'll see what the counsellor wants."

It was a short drive from the causeway to the small glass-and-steel office building. Shayne parked in the lot and went up to the second floor and the office of Frank Candia.

There were no police there now, but the receptionist seemed nervous. She passed Shayne on to a slender brunette with severe, quiet features but a body that was far from severe and would quiet no male.

"Mike Shayne," the redhead said. "Mr. Candia called me."

"Of course, Mr. Shayne," the brunette said. 'He's on the telephone, if you wouldn't mind waiting a moment."

"I wouldn't mind," Shayne said.

The brunette gave him the faintest of frosty looks, and went back to her work. If there had been a robbery, and if it made the receptionist nervous, it did not seem to be affecting the brunette. Shayne waited. It was quick. Something buzzed, and the brunette nodded to Shayne.

"You can go in, Mr. Shayne."

He went in.

Frank Candia came out from behind his mammoth desk, wiping his hands on a kleenex. Shayne studied the man: short, heavy-set, with a florid face, a good suit, dark hair and a bandage on his head.

"Glad you could make it so fast, Shayne," Frank Candia said, wiping his brow. "Robbery. I came in too soon and got tapped on the skull."

"You walked in alone and tried to jump a thief?"

"Not alone. Mr. Dewitt Grayson, IV, was with me—a fat lot of good he did me. I think he nearly fainted. I jumped the guy. Stupid. Wasn't thinking. You know how it is."

"You got a look at him?"

Candia shook his head. "Masked, one of those kids rubber masks, and all in black. Quick, good reflexes, probably young. Cleaned me out."

Candia motioned to the safe that stood open and empty in the wall. Shayne inspected the safe. He turned back to Candia.

"Professional job. He just busted the safe?"

"That's all."

"Why do you want me? It's a police job."

"They're on it. Mr. Dewitt Grayson, IV, called them while I was still out."

Shayne watched the sweating man. Candia stared back a moment, then retreated behind his desk and sat down. Shayne still watched the man.

"You make me think you aren't happy Grayson called the cops," the detective said slowly.

Candia nodded. "Maybe. I don't know. Sit down, Shayne."

Shayne sat, lit a cigarette. That seemed to give Candia the idea. He reached to a box on his desk, got a cigarette, lit it and blew smoke.

"There was maybe five thousand dollars in cash in that safe, some non-negotiable securities, and a lot of papers I can replace. A pretty small haul."

"You don't mind losing that, and you have some reason for not wanting the police?"

"I mind, but it won't prostrate me," Candia said. The lawyer stood up again. "Come with me."

Shayne followed the lawyer to a door in the private office. Candia opened it. Shayne looked in at a small bathroom. Candia went to the casement window that was open.

"He came in through here. The police are sure and so am I," Candia said. "At night this window is supposed to be locked. There's an alarm on the front door, and on the windows—if they're closed. The window was open last night."

"A mistake? You usually close it yourself?"

"No, I don't. Also, the bathroom door locks automatically. It wasn't locked. Not unlocked, understand, just not closed all the way."

"As if by accident," Shayne said. "All right, you suspect an inside job. Who?"

"I've got two girls and a part-time assistant. The assistant wasn't here yesterday. The receptionist is never the last to leave. My secretary, Miss Brenner, locks up. She's never missed before."

"So your secretary is who you suspect. That brunette outside with the cold face and hot figure?"

"Miss Beth Brenner, with me for six years. Yes, I guess I suspect her."

"And you don't want to turn her in?"

Candia closed the bathroom door, returned to his seat behind his desk. The lawyer watched Shayne as the redhead also sat down again.

"I don't know if I want to turn her in, Shayne. I do know that I want to know more about it. I want to know what made her do it, if she did. I want to find out who's behind it before I turn her over."

"Why?"

Candia nodded. "Okay, fair enough. First, I like her. Second, she's been a damned good kid and a good secretary for six years. Third, I'm a lawyer. I've seen a lot of people in trouble. I know a lot about circumstances and pressures that can make someone do one foolish act and pay the rest of their lives."

Shayne chewed his cigarette. "You're saying you want to give the girl a break if she has one coming."

"I guess that's it. I guess I'm saying I think she has a break coming. Maybe I'm all wrong, but before I throw her to Peter Painter to work over, I want to be sure. Besides, if you can get to the guy who did it, and get my money back first, maybe they'll go easy on her if she is involved."

"You like her that much?" Shayne asked bluntly.

"I do. Not the way you mean, although I'll admit I've given the idea a lot of thought."

"Six years of thought without action?"

"I'm a married man, two kids, and Miss Brenner isn't exactly parading herself for the first bidder. She doesn't flaunt it around, Shayne."

"You've got no idea why she might open the way for a thief? Need of money, do you think? Any of that?"

"No, nothing. I pay her well. I thought she was happy and totally loyal."

"What does she think I am? You brought me here."

Candia nodded. "She thinks you're from an insurance company to get a report on what was stolen. Not an investigator, just a claims man."

"It may not fool her."

"I'm not sure I want it to. Maybe if she knows, or thinks, I've got a man on the case privately, she'll get nervous and come to me. Or maybe she'll figure out I'm trying to save her from the cops."

"Okay. Say she doesn't tumble. I'm not sure I like your job, Candia. It puts me against the police in a major felony case; maybe it even makes me a withholder of evidence."

"I don't see how. I have a right to hire a man to protect my interests. Those papers that were stolen can be replaced, but I'd rather not have them around—they're confidential account material. As for Miss Brenner, I'm pretty sure the police have her in mind anyway. And I'm just playing a hunch, no evidence."

"If I get evidence, I'll have to give it to the police."

"Understood, but first you tell me. You can skate that close to the edge for double fee."

"Double, eh?" Shayne said. "Okay, you've got yourself a detective. I'll need the girl's address,

and a list of what was actually taken. Also, anything you can tell me about the thief."

"About the thief I've told you all: masked, in black, young and quick. He never spoke. He had what looked to me like a big Colt 357 Magnum, 4-inch barrel. It felt bigger on my head. He got in through that window somehow.

"Beth Brenner lives at the Miradero Apartments, up on Calle Rioja here in the Beach. The list is already typed up. I told her you'd need it for the insurance. Here it is. How about your money?"

"A check for six hundred dollars will do for now," Shayne said, taking the list.

"Which makes fifty-six hundred I'm out. Maybe I should have my head examined."

Shayne waited for the check, thinking that maybe Frank Candia should have his head examined, unless there was more to it all than there seemed. The redhead did not believe Candia's story of no boy-girl play with Miss Brenner. Maybe that was the answer—or maybe it was just Frank Candia's way of starting up some play by getting on the girl's good side.

"Here you are," Candia said.

"Thanks. I'll be in touch." Shayne said.

Shayne nodded, and left. Miss Beth Brenner looked up as he passed. If she was hiding anything she didn't show it. She gave

Shayne a small smile that changed her whole face—the frost seemed to vanish and leave a very nice young lady.

But a very controlled young lady.

Outside Shayne thought about that. He had to agree with Candia that it looked like an inside touch. Maybe Miss Beth Brenner was a lot more than she seemed.

III

CHIEF OF MIAMI Beach Detectives Peter Painter gave Mike Shayne a baleful stare as the big redhead strode into Painter's office

and sat down unasked. It was an act Shayne couldn't resist. In any other office he would have waited to be invited to sit, but needling Painter was a pleasure.

"What bad wind brings you here, Shayne?" the dapper little Chief of Detectives wanted to know.

"The Frank Candia burglary."

Painter fingered his pencil mustache. "Why has the eminent counsellor hired you? It's a straight burglary, and that's a police job. You're out."

"No," Shayne said evenly. "Candia's hired me to recover his papers, not the money. Just the papers, and that's his right."

"You're sure he's not out to protect someone?" Painter snapped.

Shayne had always admitted that Painter was a shrewd and skilled detective, no matter how much he disliked the little fashion-plate personally. Now he considered Painter, sitting there in his custom-made blue pin-stripe like some bantam peacock, and was aware that Painter had analyzed the situation, and Frank Candia, pretty well.

"He may be," Shayne said. "There's nothing wrong about that. Maybe someone needs protecting."

Painter nodded slowly. "Candia figures there had to be an inside connection, right?"

"Is that what you think?"

"You know damn well I do," Painter said. "You can look a job over as well as we can. It has every smell of an inside connection. No one gets into that office undetected unless that bathroom window and the bathroom door are open."

"You have someone in mind?"

"I've got everyone in mind," Painter snapped. "The secretary, Beth Brenner, was supposedly the last to leave. The receptionist, Mary Juarez, doesn't make a lot of money, and who says she couldn't have copied a key and come back to set up the entry?"

"You've got a devious mind, Painter."

"Criminals have devious minds," the dapper little Chief said drily. "I don't rule out the assistant, one slick young man named Mark Delange. He was supposedly out of town on business, but we're checking."

"So that's the cast of suspects?"

"Not quite, Shayne," Painter said coldly. "I don't rule out your client, the eminent Frank Candia himself. We only have his word for what was in that safe. How do I know there wasn't something Candia wanted to be missing? Something I don't know about yet? Men have arranged burglaries of their own premises to cover up dangerous situations before."

Shayne said nothing. The thought had crossed his mind—but if that were the case, then

Frank Candia really had to be out of his mind to hire Shayne. If a cover-up was the motive, it made no sense at all to hire a detective.

No, he was sure that Candia was clean on arranging the burglary, but he had no reason yet to tell Painter what he thought. Not that the peppery Chief would give a damn what he thought.

"That's the inside," Shayne said instead. "What's happening about the outside, the burglar himself?"

"We're working on him. The M.O. is pretty definite, if he's a pro, and he looks it, we'll name him."

"Tracing the loot?"

"You know what we're doing, Shayne. If you don't, I'm not about to tell you. I don't like you mixing in this, and you know that, too. You've got to be working for Candia, and that could mean against us. Be careful."

"I'm always careful, and all I'm doing is look for the loot," Shayne said. "From what Candia tells me, most of it is valueless. It might be dumped. I want it for Candia, and that's his right. So if you find it in an ashcan, tell me."

Painter's cold eyes blazed at Shayne. "I'll tell you what I think you can know, when I want to tell you! You watch your step around me, Shayne, you hear?"

Shayne stood up. "Thanks for your help, Chief."

"Don't push me, Shayne."

Shayne left the dour little Chief glowering in his chair. It was not an unusual way for Shayne to leave Painter. The two men had never gotten along and each had his reasons. But Painter was a good cop, and usually fair, so Shayne knew that if Painter really learned anything of importance to Shayne, the Chief would tell him—eventually.

Outside in the morning sun, Shayne stood beside his car and considered. Candia thought that Beth Brenner was the insider on the robbery. The police were investigating everyone else. If he were to do his job, he would best concentrate on Miss Brenner. But she would be safe in Frank Candia's office until lunchtime. No one was likely to visit her there.

He got into the car and drove back across the causeway into Miami and his office. Lucy Hamilton had no messages.

"No calls, Michael. Did you take the job?"

"I did, Angel. Double fee."

Shayne went on into his private office. He got out his confidential file of special contacts. It was kept in a locked cabinet and written in code.

In any city there are men who live deep in the shadow world of crime, violence and the fast buck, and who know all there is to know about that world. Men who will listen, watch, and tell the right man for the right price, as long as they can lurk unseen in the

darkness that is their only safety.

Shayne studied his file and picked up the telephone. He dialed.

"Yeah," a low voice said.

"I want to talk to Augie."

"Who wants to talk?"

"Shayne."

"I never heard of no Augie. You made a mistake."

The low voice hung up. Shayne took out a cigarette, and looked through his file again. Once more he dialed.

"Marco's Tavern," a brisk voice said.

"Mr. Devine there? This is Mr. Michaels," Shayne said.

"What's this Devine look like?"

Shayne used the formula for contacting Cha-Cha Devine. "Big guy, dark, a scar on his left cheek. Tell him Mr. Michaels wants to buy the washing machine."

"I'll tell him if I see him," the brisk voice said.

Shayne hung up again, sat back and smoked, and waited. The office was quiet, and he thought as he often did of how much of detective work was waiting.

This time it was over an hour. Shayne was just about to leave to go back to Frank Candia's office and pick up Beth Brenner, when the telephone rang. He picked it up. A voice seemed to breathe on the other end.

"Shayne? Cha-Cha. What's the story?"

"The robbery at Frank Candia's office. Who did it?"

"Cops're asking, too. I ain't smelled nothing yet."

"It's a small job. Two bills for the name."

"I'll get back to you."

Shayne frowned as he hung up. Painter was checking with his pigeons, too. Standard good police work. Most robberies are solved on a tip. Shayne had his panama on when the phone rang once more. This voice was hoarse and shaky. Augie The Dip. Shayne made the same offer.

"I don't know, Shayne. There's somethin' funny about this one. Word's out on it, only no one's really sayin' nothin'."

"Three bills for the name then."

"Okay. Only that's what I don't figure. The name. No one's sayin' no name."

That's where Shayne left it. If the robbery had been a pro job, Cha-Cha or Augie would find out who. But Augie rarely missed much, and if he said there was something he couldn't figure, then there was.

IV

MIKE SHAYNE got back to Frank Candia's office building just before the lunch break. He took up a position from where he could watch the single entrance and the whole parking lot.

He did not have long to wait. Beth Brenner came out almost at once. Shayne started the car to

follow wherever the brunette drove.

She did not drive. She walked past her car and out toward Collins Avenue. Shayne hurried after her on foot. She went only a few doors along the street and into a busy working girl's luncheonette. Shayne watched her through the window.

She sat alone at a small table. She ordered. The waitress brought her lunch and she began to eat. No one sat at her table. Shayne settled to watch her eat her way through the lunch when he caught a familiar reflection in the window.

Frank Candia was hurrying along the other side of the street. Shayne watched the lawyer in the window. Candia looked nervous. As Shayne watched, he stopped in his tracks and looked at his watch. The lawyer wiped his brow with the ever-present kleenex. Then he turned and hurried back the way he had come.

Shayne glanced inside the luncheonette. Beth Brenner was still eating quietly and alone. She did not look like someone waiting for anything. Shayne went after Frank Candia.

He caught up close enough in time to see Candia go into the parking lot toward his car. Shayne went to his own car, keeping Candia in sight.

When the lawyer drove out of the lot, Shayne was close behind. Candia didn't even look around. He looked like a man with something on his mind.

Shayne followed Candia's big Lincoln at a discreet distance, but he could have pulled right up behind the man. Candia didn't seem at all worried about a tail. The lawyer drove without the smallest attempt at evasion. The Lincoln went north into an area of older houses set back from the beach itself.

Shayne dropped back in the opener section, and had to speed up when Candia turned off left through a set of broken old iron gates. He reached the gates in time to see the Lincoln vanish behind what looked like an old, abandoned mansion. He had to make a quick decision. He drove on a few yards, parked, and en-

tered the dilapidated grounds through a break in the wall.

He skirted through thick, neglected trees to the corner of the old house. The Lincoln was parked at the rear. Shayne heard voices. He moved into the cover of the crumbling old walls and stepped light as a cat to the rear. The voices stopped.

Frank Candia's voice rose in a sudden cry, "No! No, listen. I—. Ahhhhhhhh!"

Shayne ran. Candia's voice had almost shouted, there had been a heavy noise, and the cry that was almost a scream from Candia.

Shayne came out behind the house.

Frank Candia was on the ground. There was blood. Someone was running, crashing through the brush, around the next corner at the other side of the old mansion. Shayne pounded toward the noise of the fleeing person. He reached the next corner of the house. A slender man was running away toward a side road.

A man dressed all in black.

Shayne ran full speed. The man in black turned, went down on one knee, raised his arm. Shayne dove for cover. He heard the two quick shots, and felt the bullets sing over through the air where he had been.

He looked up from behind a tree where he had rolled and saw the man clearly for one frozen moment. A young man, almost a boy, with fair hair and handsome features. The fair hair was long, almost on the boy's shoulders.

The moment ended and the boy was running again. Shayne chased but he had lost too much ground. The boy reached a small gray car, jumped in, and roared away. Someone else had been in the car.

Shayne watched the car go. He saw no visible license plate in the heavy cloud of dust from the left side road.

Shayne ran back to the mansion where Frank Candia was still on the ground. As the redhead ran up, Candia groaned and sat up. He had a long, ugly, bloody cut on his left forehead to go with the bandages still on his head. He saw Shayne, and began to curse.

"So it was you! He saw you, heard you! Damn it, maybe he was going to tell me something!"

Shayne bent down. "How are you? Is that the only wound?"

"Damn it, yes! He slugged me. He said I'd brought the fuzz, and he'd warned me, and then he slugged me! Damn it, I forgot all about you! What were you doing following me, anyway?!"

"My job," Shayne said bluntly. "I do it my way. Now tell me what this was all about."

"I didn't hire you to investigate me!"

"You hired me to investigate what's behind a robbery. Part of what's behind it might get you killed. Part of my job is maybe

to protect you from yourself. Now tell me!"

Candia grumbled, moved to get up, groaned and sat back on the dirt in the sun.

"I got this call," he said. No names; I didn't know the voice. He said meet him here if I wanted my papers back, if I wanted to know more about what happened. I did want to know, and I want my papers back. So I came. He said come alone. Then you had to—"

"Maybe you're lucky I did. It was probably a trap. What did he say when you got here?"

"He was waiting in the house. Just a kid! I got mad and told him he better give me back my papers. He laughed. He said maybe he would, but first he wanted more money. I told him they weren't worth anything. Before he could say anything else he heard you, a horn blew somewhere, and he slugged me."

"A horn? You're sure?"

"Yeah, there must have been two of them."

Shayne nodded. "A signal. They saw me. I just don't get what they could have wanted."

Candia stood up now, slowly. He was pale. "Maybe it was just a trap to kill me. They must know that those papers aren't worth anything."

Shayne studied the lawyer, who was dabbing at the ugly wound on his head. Shayne thought about the story. It didn't make much sense—unless there was something Frank Candia wasn't telling him. Only one thing was sure: Candia had come to meet the handsome boy and had been slugged.

Candia said, "You think maybe the kid was trying to protect someone? Miss Brenner?"

"Could be, but I don't see why he'd want to see you if that was the case. Did he say anything about why he expected more money? For what?"

"Not a word. Just that he'd give me back my papers, but he wanted more money first. Just a few scratches on paper, and I would have—"

Candia stopped, looked at Shayne. "The securities?"

"What about them?"

"They're non-negotiable unless I signed them over! Maybe he wanted me to sign them over in exchange for the other papers! The damn fool."

"Why damn fool?"

"The other papers aren't worth anything, I told you!"

"Maybe he had a reserve idea —you. A little personal pressure, and you walked in like a fly into the spider's web."

Candia paled. "Pressure? Kidnap? Maybe—torture?"

"It's been done," Shayne said dryly.

Candia trembled. "God! I couldn't take anything like that.

Maybe I do need your protection."

"Just don't go to any meetings alone from now on," Shayne said. "We better get back. This boy seems to know a lot about you, and now he knows about me. It looks more and more like someone's telling him things."

Candia was in no condition to drive. Shayne drove him to his doctor, and Candia sent his assistant out to pick up the Lincoln.

Shayne went back to Candia's office building and took up his position again. Stake-out was not his favorite part of detective work, but next to informers it probably solved most cases.

This time he had something to think about while he waited and watched. Frank Candia could be up to some kind of trick. And now Candia knew that Shayne was around and watching.

V

WHEN BETH BRENNER came out it was after 5:30. Mike Shayne tailed her car. She drove straight home to The Miradero Apartments. Shayne watched her enter the third of the units that made up the apartment house, each three stories high. The mailboxes indicated that her apartment was on the second floor rear.

Shayne considered. He could wait outside and observe her comings and goings, and who might visit her. But that would be hard if he only watched the entrance. He returned to the street and looked around.

The Miradero was set around an open court, and stood at the end of the block. Across the side street from the third unit was a two-story block of shops with a flat roof. Shayne got his binoculars from his car and walked to the block of shops. At the rear of the shops a fire escape went up to the roof. Shayne found a long board and pulled down the weighted bottom ladder of the fire escape. He climbed to the roof.

On the roof he bent low and worked his way to the front edge. He located what had to be the windows of Beth Brenner's apartment, kneeled at the roof-parapet, and focused his glasses. The windows were not shaded. He could see clearly through a wide picture window into a pleasant living room. To the right, through a smaller window, he could see part of a bedroom, and at the rear of the living room an archway that led into what was probably a kitchen.

He did not see Beth Brenner. Could she have gone back out while he had been climbing up to the roof? Then he saw her. She was in the bedroom, and came into his limited vision of that room from the hidden part.

She was in only her panties and bra. Her body was even better than he had thought. As he

watched she slipped on a robe, and sat at a dressing table and began brushing her dark hair.

She brushed for a long time, and as Shayne watched he began to learn more about her. She lived alone, her apartment was good and immaculate as if she enjoyed good things alone, and cared for them. The way she brushed her hair, watching herself in her mirror, he saw that she was a woman who was pleased with herself, who liked what and who she was.

The brushing finally over, she went into the living room where Shayne could see all that she did, and made herself a martini. She sat quietly, without television, and drank alone. A calm woman, unhurried. She had three drinks, and then began to make her dinner. Shayne settled down for a long watch and wait.

Watching people through windows was not something that made him feel particularly happy, but it was part of his work. It had always been part of the work, a big part sometimes, and it had to be done. Detectives do many things that are not exactly pleasant—not that watching a pretty girl like Beth Brenner was all bad, but just watching had never exactly thrilled the redhead. Part of the job, nothing more.

It was a long, weary job. No one came to the roof where Shayne watched, and long after dark he watched the now lighted rooms of

Beth Brenner's apartment. Nothing happened. No one came. There were no telephone calls. Beth Brenner did nothing out of the ordinary.

Yet something did happen; something vague, small. Something inside Beth Brenner herself.

Her dinner over, her dishes carefully washed and put away, her apartment tidied, she relaxed in the living room and watched television. Only she didn't relax. Not openly nervous, anxious, but it was there—in the business of her actions, the slightly edgy tidying of the room, the quick smoking of too many cigarettes, the tapping of her foot on a fine, swinging leg.

Not at once, but slowly growing as Shayne watched. By eleven o'clock it was obvious. The cigarette butts filled the ashtray, and the butts grew longer, stamped out quicker, as the night went on. She

made drinks, and they went down faster. Her attention began to wander from the television set. She looked at her watch more and more as it got past eleven.

And after eleven o'clock Shayne became aware of a growing concern in her—she was looking at the telephone.

Near midnight she began to pace.

The anxiety was clear now, glaring. She was waiting for something: a telephone call, a visitor, something. Yet it was indefinite, as if she had no date, only an expectation, a hope. A woman with some clandestine affair she never knew would become a reality on any given night? Or a woman waiting to hear from a confederate in crime?

Whatever she was waiting for didn't come.

At midnight she went to bed. Shayne remained on his roof for another hour, watching the dark apartment. Nothing stirred. A few minutes after one he gave up and went home.

He was back on the roof by seven, without going into his office. Beth Brenner was up and still alone. She was a modern girl, oblivious to eyes, and her shades were never drawn. She was also still watching the telephone.

The telephone did not ring, and Beth Brenner went to work. Shayne followed her to the office, and then checked in at Miami Beach Police Headquarters. Peter Painter had nothing to tell him, which bothered the Chief of Detectives enough that he forgot to be curt with Shayne.

"Nothing, and that's damned funny," Painter said. "The M.O. fits three punks we know, and all of them are accounted for. I don't figure it, Shayne. That job had all the marks of a pro."

"What do your pigeons say?"

"Not a sound."

"What about the assistant, Mark Delange? You traced his actions?"

"He looks clean. So does the receptionist, Mary Juarez, and the Brenner girl."

"One of them isn't."

"Or Frank Candia's playing a game."

Shayne let that hang in the air as he left. He drove back to his office. There were no calls or messages. Once you contact an informer, you wait. You don't contact again—his life, and his value to you, depend on that.

Lucy Hamilton had a few routine matters for him to attend to, and then he grabbed a sandwich and went back to his stake-out. The afternoon was uneventful. At closing, he tailed Beth Brenner back to her apartment again, and once more took up his post on the roof across the street.

It went on for two more days.

Identical: nothing at all happened.

Beth Brenner went through all

the same motions, watched the telephone that did not ring, paced, drank, smoked, tapped her foot, went to bed.

Two more days.

On the third day, as Mike Shayne groaned to himself and was about to give up, to decide that Beth Brenner had something on her mind, but that he was not going to find out what by watching her.

After her dinner, the dishes, and hour at the television set in her robe, she suddenly stood up, stared at the telephone for almost a full minute, and turned and went into her bedroom. Shayne could not see after that for a time.

When she reappeared where he could see her, she was dressed to go out in a tight green sheath. Her hair was down and shining. She looked like a woman about to be seen by men. Shayne hurried down from the roof and to his car. He could see her car from where he was parked.

She appeared only moments later. She got into her car and drove off with a vicious squeal of tires. Shayne followed her into the heavy traffic of Miami Beach's main holocaust of fun and noise. She did not stop but drove on into Miami across the causeway to a garish and rundown section of town Shayne knew only too well. She stopped in the parking lot of a loud, brassy psychedelic joint named Lulu's Pit.

She got out of her car, stood for a moment as if trying to get up her nerve, then walked into the joint. Her face was tense, uneasy.

VI

THE WALL OF noise hit Mike Shayne in the face like a physical blow. Frantic noise and pounding movement so thick it seemed that the room itself was moving in a great mass. On a raised bandstand in the rear five long-haired boys in ruffled shirts and bare chests stomped and howled and battered electric guitars.

Everyone seemed to be dancing, the tables barely visible through the crush of bodies. Glasses lined a long bar on the left, but most of the seats were empty. Everyone was on the dance floor.

Shayne saw Beth Brenner at the far rear of the bar alone on a stool. As he watched the bartender slipped a drink in front of her. She paid, but she did not touch the drink.

The drink was an excuse to sit at the bar, nothing more. Shayne leaned in an unobtrusive corner, not bothered by a waiter in the mob, and watched Beth Brenner. She was uneasy. She did not seem to be much at home in the wild joint, yet she seemed to be familiar with the place—as if she had been brought to it more than once by someone who was at home in it.

Someone she was hoping to find tonight.

That was clear in everything she did. She watched the faces, looked into the mirror behind the bar every time the outside door opened. Every ten minutes or so, after sitting sunk in a kind of lethargy, she looked carefully around the room to see if she had missed who she was looking for.

There were the usual pick-up attempts. She barely noticed the men. She was not nervous or uneasy when the men came up. That was familiar ground, Shayne could see. She either ignored the men until they went away, or she answered curtly and gave them a withering stare.

This went on for some time, and along the way she finished her first drink and ordered a second. The second drink, set before her in the din of the revolving room, seemed to make her realize how long she had been waiting. She stared at the drink, glanced around again, then suddenly downed the drink in one long gulp, stood up, and walked to the bandstand through the mob of dancers.

She stood in front of the gyrating boys with their electric guitars. One of them, the leader, saw her and grinned. She said something. He laughed and shook his head, touched his ear. He couldn't hear her. She motioned urgently, and the leader shrugged, laughed, and then bent down close to her. She half-shouted at him. He nodded, shrugged, shook his head.

She turned away abruptly and began to push her way through the mob again toward the outside door. Shayne went after her. He had to move fast not to lose her. She went out, with the redhead as close behind as he thought safe. She would recognize him, and begin to wonder about what he was doing, if she saw him.

But she had her mind on her own problems. She did not look around. She went straight to her car. Shayne took up the chase. It led to another club no one could have told from Lulu's Pit. The bar was on the right, the band wore shaggy shirts instead of ruffles, and the beat was a little different, but that was all.

Beth Brenner went through the same motions, only faster. She looked the place over only once, carefully, and brushed off only two pick-up attempts, before talking to a heavy-set man who seemed to be the owner. She got another shrug, and a tolerant shake of the heavy man's head.

This went on through two more clubs and then the pattern changed. She stopped at a large frame house in a quieter section of Miami. Shayne did not go in this time; he would have been spotted at once. He waited in the car and she soon came back out. She walked to her car. She walked

more slowly now, and at her car she stopped and stood absolutely motionless for over a minute. Her shoulders seemed to sag and she held to the car for support.

Shayne watched and waited. She did not even glance around, never saw him parked in the shadows. She was utterly silent, isolated in a dark world.

Then she took a shuddering breath and got into the car. Once more Mike Shayne followed. This time she drove back across the causeway and to her apartment. Shayne watched her windows from below. He did not go to the roof, and soon her lights went out. Shayne knew she was not going out again tonight.

He drove back across the causeway to Lulu's Pit. The din was as loud as before, the crowd as thick. Shayne had a beer this time, and asked for Lulu. She came out from somewhere—a big, blowzy blond in a tasseled silver dress.

"What brings you to my joint? Shayne? A bad wind?"

"They're all bad, Lulu," Shayne said pleasantly, showing his teeth in his wolfish grin. "I've been tailing a girl, nothing criminal. She hung in here a long time looking for someone."

He described Beth Brenner. Lulu shook her head.

"We get a hundred like that."

"She talked to your band leader."

"This is Mike Shayne, a friend of mine," Lulu said to the leader. "He wants to ask some questions. You tell him the answers."

"Sure," the boy said, and looked at Shayne questioningly.

"A girl named Beth Brenner talked to you earlier. What did she talk about?"

"Sure," the boy said, "no sweat. She just wanted to know if I'd seen Joe Gambin around. I hadn't, not for a couple of days, maybe more. She wanted to know if I knew where Gambin was. I don't."

"Who is Gambin?"

"A guy comes in regular, over a year now. He plays some horn, so he likes to sit in sometimes. He's not much good."

"What does he do? Where do I look for him?"

"Do? Nothing as far as I know. You know the type. He goes around the joints sucking on women. He's smart, smooth and good looking. So why not?"

"Where does he live?"

"Who knows? Maybe nowhere. I mean, maybe he just lives in the pad of the dame he's on with at the moment, you know?"

"That's all you can tell me?"

"That's it."

The boy went back to his music, and Shayne stayed long enough to have a drink with Lulu. It paid to keep on good terms with the people like Lulu.

After that he went on out to his car again. He lit a cigarette and thought. He could continue following the trail of Beth Brenner through the clubs, but it was clear that she hadn't found a lead to Joe Gambin.

Shayne didn't think he would learn much more from the other joints like Lulu's. But Beth Brenner's last stop had been diffierent. He decided to have a look at that frame house in the quieter section of the city.

VII

THERE WAS STILL light in the big frame house when Mike Shayne parked once more in the dark shadows of the trees. He saw shapes moving against the drawn shades in a silent dance-like pattern.

He approached the house quietly, his gray eyes alert. But there was no one on the grounds, which were in shabby shape. At the door he saw a small, brass plaque: *Cathcart Social Club.*

The door was open. Shayne walked in.

He found himself in a comfortable foyer. A desk at the far end was empty, and beyond it through an archway there was music and the sound of voices. Shayne went on through the archway and into a large room that had once been some rich man's giant living room. Now it was furnished with half-seedy furniture in small sections, like a series of smaller living rooms set around an open area where there could be dancing.

There was dancing. Three bored looking couples danced in the center to the music of a phonograph. The couples were as far past their prime, as tired, as the music, some ancient foxtrot from a bygone age. They danced, the couples, without pleasure or animation. They moved through the motions, their faces masks, their minds far from this shabby room on secret troubles of their own.

Around them, in the small sections of chairs and sofas, other people sat in desultory conversation—mostly women of all ages. They sat primly, but with faces so

tired of it all Shayne wondered how they could sit without screaming. A few men tried to keep some kind of semblance of socializing going. One of these men saw Shayne enter.

He jumped up with a broad smile that was part welcome, part professional greeting, and part relief that something real was happening. A short, swarthy man with the shoulders of a boxer—a welterweight gone to a little fat, but not too much.

"Evening, friend. New member?" the man said to Shayne.

The women's eyes all turned to look, even the eyes of the women on the dance floor. In unison, like the hungry eyes of a wolfpack surveying a possible dinner on the hoof. They were women who lived on large despair and small hope: someone, somewhere, to love them. Shayne thought of Beth Brenner.

"No, I'm looking for Beth Brenner."

The welterweight's eyes narrowed. "Beth? She was here earlier? What do you want with her?"

"Nothing. I really want to talk to Joe Gambin."

"Cop?"

"Not exactly. What makes you say cop when I ask about Joe Gambin?"

The swarthy welter seemed to realize that he had said too much. He surveyed Shayne, sizing him up. It was the cool appraisal of a professional, without fear or bravado.

"Maybe you better talk to Mr. Cathcart," the welter said.

The man turned and walked toward a door on the left. Shayne followed. The man knocked, and a voice said to come in. Shayne went inside a small private office behind the welter.

"This guy's looking for Joe Gambin."

Mr. Cathcart frowned. "Is Gambin in trouble again? I knew I should never have let that punk join the club."

Cathcart was a big, beefy man in his fifties. He watched Shayne morosely, and finally waved the redhead to a seat, and dismissed the welter.

As the welter left, he nodded toward Shayne. "He says he ain't exactly a cop."

"All right, Luis," Cathcart said.

When they were alone, Cathcart said, "Private cop?"

"Yes. What's wrong with Joe Gambin?"

"What's wrong with any punk? He's a fast buck bum. This is a social club, Mr.—?"

"Shayne. Mike Shayne."

"Look, Shayne," Cathcart said, insistent, leaning toward the redhead. "This is sort of a date bureau, right? The broads come here to meet guys. They want husbands, and they pay to come and find them. The guys, too, mostly, want sort of steady dames. You

know the kind of guy. Poor slobs never had a dame for long."

"Go on," Shayne said.

"Okay, so once in a while we get a guy who's just on the make. How do you figure him? Joe was like that. He was young, handsome, the old dames liked him and they never really believed what he said. They just liked him around, and they didn't mind paying out a little. For Joe it was beer money on a slow time."

Cathcart took a breath. "Then this Brenner kid comes. She's a looker, but with some dames it just never worked out, see? She's no kid. So she's here. We've had others like her. They don't last. They come here when they're desperate, and they get over it fast. Only Brenner she meets Joe Gambin."

"They clicked?"

"It looked like it."

"Why only looked like it?"

"Because Joe Gambin you can't figure. The dame was hooked, but Joey just looks out for Joey. He acted like he went for the dame, but who knows what his angle maybe was?"

Shayne rubbed at his ear as he watched Cathcart. "You have a reason for thinking Gambin had some angle?"

Cathcart sighed wearily. Shayne could see that the owner of the social club didn't like anything about complications of any kind. The club had probably skated on the edge of legality more than a few times, and trouble was something Cathcart could do without.

"Gambin hasn't been around for a few days. He's not at his place—Luis checked for me when I needed Joey. Tonight the Brenner girl come around looking. She was all tight, nervous, maybe scared. To me, that spells trouble with Joey Gambin in the middle."

"Where is his place?"

"A couple of miles from here, over in the Beach. Joey likes the Beach. The Flamingo Hotel. It's not as good as it sounds."

"What does Joey look like?"

Instead of answering, Cathcart opened a drawer in his desk, rooted around for a moment, and came out with a photograph. He handed it to Shayne. The redhead studied it. It showed a slender, dapper, dark man well set-up in evening clothes. A young man, no more than thirty, with bright dark eyes made for dazzling women. Everything about him shined with youth, from his glistening black hair to his dazzling shoes. But it was the eyes Mike Shayne looked at most—con men's eyes.

"Thanks," Shayne said. "If he shows up, let me know, okay?"

"Will it keep the cops of my back?"

"I'll do my best."

"Okay, then."

Shayne left the office. His gray eyes were narrowed as he passed through the big room where all

the hopeful women looked at him again. He didn't notice them. He was thinking—Cathcart had been unusually helpful. Why? Maybe Cathcart knew that there could be no harm in anyone looking for Joey Gambin.

There was something about the social club he did not like. It was too smooth, and the swarthy Luis had too much of the look of a muscle man. Why did a social club need a bodyguard? He was still thinking about this when he emerged out into the night. He started for his car.

His eyes caught the faint movement: a sense of shapes in the night. Feet ran lightly in the grass of the shabby front yard.

Shadows closed in on him.

Four, perhaps five, shapes around him in the dark and coming close fast.

VIII

THEY MADE A mistake. They did not all come from the same direction. If they had, Mike Shayne would have to have fought them all at once, and five was heavy odds. Even five kids, because in the pale light from the social club he saw that that was what they were—punk kids, with young, contorted faces.

They came from all sides, moving in to attack the way gangs always attack, needing each other for support. Half grinning with the uneasy bravado of youth.

Shayne ran straight at the two coming from his right.

The maneuver caught them by surprise. Young punks always expect their victims to stand trembling, to try to reason, to remain warily on guard and waiting for the attack.

Shayne was on the first two, attacking when they had expected only defense, before the other three knew what was happening. He caught the first one flush on the nose with a hard right after a left feint. He felt the boy's nose break and the gush of blood. The boy howled and went over like a stunned ox.

Shayne turned on the second, a short, burly boy with pale hair. The boy swung twice, right and left. A sucker's right lead. Shayne slipped left, and smashed his right hard into the burly boy's exposed face.

The boy yelled, fell back, and Shayne stepped in with a combination to his belly. The boy

doubled over and went down retching.

Shayne whirled, was half around when two of the others jumped on him like a pair of wildcats. They hung on him and tried to wrestle him down while the third circled looking for a shot at his face.

The redhead snarled like a cornered bull and staggered with both boys clinging to him. There was a tree. He ran straight into the tree as hard as he could with one boy between himself and the thick trunk.

He heard a sharp crack as the impact snapped a rib in the punk's chest.

Then there was only one clinging to him, trying to kick and hit him. Shayne flung him off: faced the last boy.

He recognized the face of the last boy who stood some feet away not moving in. A boy with fair hair and handsome features. Long hair, and dressed all in black. It was the same boy who had hit Frank Candia and run to the waiting gray car.

The one with the broken nose was still sitting on the ground, trying to stop the blood. The burly, retching punk was gone. The one whose rib he had broken leaned against the tree, holding his side. Like most kids, they were tough and dangerous when they had the advantage, but injured they folded. They lacked the staying power of a grown man.

Shayne had only two to face now. He moved toward them breathing hard, snarling, "You want to tell me what this is all about?"

The handsome one who had hit Frank Candia hesitated and then reached into his black jacket. The fifth kid, the one Shayne had only flung off, watched the blond boy. Shayne jumped. He kicked the gun from the handsome boy's hand before it was half up.

The boy ran.

Shayne was after him in a flash. The boy went around the social club in the night. Behind the club there was an alley. Shayne raced after the fleeing blond youth. The youth vaulted a fence. Shayne clambered over and dropped into the yard of another dark house.

The youth was gone.

Two gates and the rear doors of two buildings opened off the yard. Shayne listened. He heard nothing. In the night there was neither sound nor movement. The blond youth had vanished.

Shayne tried the gates, and the doors, but it was no use. The gates led into other empty alleys, and both back doors were locked on the inside. The kid could have gone through any of them.

Shayne went back over the fence and along the alley at a run. When he reached the yard of the social club again it was empty. They had all faded away. The club itself was quiet and sedate, as if

no sound of the melee had reached the hopeless people inside. Shayne searched for the pistol he had kicked from the blond youth's hand, but it was gone.

He got into his car and drove from Miami across the causeway again into Miami Beach. At the late hour the night life of Collins Avenue was going as strong as ever. People paid high prices to have fun in Miami Beach, and there was no percentage in sleeping.

Shayne found The Flamingo Hotel on a darker side street, where the night life was a few drunks staggering aimlessly in search of a kind of fun even they couldn't name.

Shayne passed The Flamingo Hotel and turned into the next street. He got out, and started back for the entrance to the hotel. He saw the gray coupe. It was parked just up the street from the Flamingo entrance. There seemed to be someone in the seat behind the wheel.

Shayne slipped into the shadows close to the buildings. He drew his automatic and glided slowly toward the parked coupe. The figure behind the wheel didn't move. Shayne inched closer. The car engine started.

Shayne jumped from the shadows and ran at the car.

Much too late he noticed the trap.

The man in the car opened the door on the street side away from Shayne and slid out.

Another figure appeared from nowhere—thin, slender, in a shining silk suit, and with a pistol in his hand. A shaft of light from some window on the silent street fell across the second man's face. Shayne had a brief glimpse as he dove for the cover of the gray coupe itself. He saw a handsome, thin face with bright and glittering eyes.

Joe Gambin!

That was all Shayne had time to see. Gambin fired. The bullet whined off the street in front of where Shayne crouched near the car. The other man was behind the car. Shayne lay flat and squeezed a shot off at Gambin, who fell back into the shadows, and then Mike Shayne fired under the car at the legs of the second man.

There was a yelp of pain or fear, and the second man ran away to the other side of the street. Shayne didn't wait. Up, he ran back for the corner.

Two shots blasted after him, showering chips from a wall beside him. He had almost reached the corner. Another shot exploded, and a searing pain tore his left arm, the force of the shot hurling him against the building wall. He bounced off the wall, fought to hold his balance, heard two more shots sing past him, and flopped on his face around the corner.

Grimacing against the pain of his left arm, he crawled around until he was looking back around the corner with his automatic levelled. They had not waited. As he took aim and looked for a target, the gray coupe roared its engine and screamed away from the curb in a dragging acceleration.

Shayne fired twice, carefully, at the speeding car. But the pain in his arm was too much. He missed, and the car vanished into the night.

Gritting his teeth, Shayne struggled up, pressing his suit against his wounded arm to stop the blood. People were on the street now, and a patrol car swung up with its siren screaming. Two uniformed men got out with their guns drawn and advanced on Shayne.

One of them recognized the redhead.

"Shayne! You okay?"

"I'll let you know when I find a doctor, Grazzi," Shayne said dryly.

"We'll take you," Patrolman Grazzi said. "You can tell us what happened on the way."

The second patrolman was clearing away the curious, moving them on. Then the two helped Shayne into the patrol car and drove him to a doctor. On the way Shayne explained as much as he had to, which was as little as he could get away with. He didn't want to mention names yet. There were too many loose ends, and something dark building up.

The doctor patched him up, cleaned the wound and strapped his arm to his chest.

"I'll give you a shot. Go home and sleep," the doctor said.

"No shot," Shayne said. "I've got work."

"If you say so," the doctor said indifferently. "But you better sleep or you'll fall down."

The two patrolmen drove him back to his car, and said that they would report the incident to Painter. Shayne went home and fell into bed.

He slept. There were times when a man had to sleep no matter how much he wanted to do.

IX

THE AUTOMATIC ALARM in his head awakened Mike Shayne at 7:30. He lay there for a moment, and the pain came throbbing back through his arm. For now he was a one-armed man. But his brain was all in one piece. It was time he had a long talk with Beth Brenner. Guilty, or innocent of the inside part of the burglary, Miss Beth Brenner had some peculiar playmates.

He managed to wash and shave with one hand, drank three cups of coffee while struggling with his ablutions and swearing volubly, and hurried out. Luckily, most cars were automatic shift types

now, and he could drive with one hand. He drove more carefully than usual; he did not want to be stopped by a traffic cop.

He reached Beth Brenner's apartment just after 8:00. He got a surprise—her car was gone. Quickly, he climbed to the same roof facing her windows and examined the rooms through his binoculars. They were empty. There was no sign of anyone there, and no sign of struggle. The remains of a quick breakfast were visible on the dining area table.

Shayne hurried back to his car and drove to Frank Candia's office building. Beth Brenner's car was there in the lot. Shayne found a public telephone in the lobby and called Candia. The lawyer answered sleepily. Shayne came alert.

"Candia? Where are you?"

"At home. I've got a direct line from the office. What's happening?"

"Is Miss Brenner in the office?"

"How do I know?" Candia snapped irritably, and Shayne heard the sounds of a cigarette being lighted. "Wait, yeah, she should be. I had her do an errand for me early this morning, some stocks to deliver to a client leaving town."

"Did she deliver them?"

"How do I know? They're nonnegotiable."

"Find out," Shayne snapped. "I'll wait here."

He gave Candia the booth number, hung up, lit a cigarette and waited. It did not take long. He picked up the receiver in midring.

"She delivered them," Candia said. "About forty-minutes ago. And she's in the office. I called."

"Okay," Shayne said. "Sit tight."

He went back out into the sun and his car. He would have to wait to talk to Miss Brenner. He drove once again to The Flamingo Hotel. This time, in broad daylight, he was cautious. The gray coupe was not in evidence. At the desk in the hotel lobby he examined the lobby carefully. No one looked dangerous.

"Yes?" the clerk asked without interest.

"I'm looking for Joe Gambin."

"Mr. Gambin?" the clerk said, and glanced at the row of slots behind him. "His key's gone. He must be in his room. You want I should ring him?"

"That's okay. He's expecting me. What's the room?"

"Room fifty-eight. That's on five."

Shayne went to the elevator. The clerk had already forgotten about him. You never knew in second-rate hotels. Sometimes they gave the most trouble, sometimes they gave no trouble. In the elevator Shayne waited grimly for the fifth floor.

The shabby corridor was deserted. When the elevator had gone back down, he unbuttoned his coat and eased his automatic around so he could reach it quickly. He stepped softly to the door of number 58. He listened. There was no sound inside. He tried the door carefully. It was unlocked.

He drew his automatic, took a breath and flung the door open hard, jumping in crouched with the automatic before him ready.

The bed was empty and unmade. Shayne whirled to see every corner of the room. There was no one in the room. Then his eyes saw the curtain covering an open closet. A man's black boot stuck out under the curtain; it stood up on its heel.

It was no empty shoe.

Shayne moved warily, but as he got closer he saw the leg in the shoe. He put away his gun. The man on the other end of that leg was not waiting to do anything.

Except maybe take a ride to the morgue.

Shayne pulled back the curtain. It was the handsome blond youth who had hit Frank Candia. He was still dressed all in black, and he had been shot twice dead center at close range—very close and facing his killer.

The youth had been shot in the closet. The bullets had both come out his back and embedded themselves in the wall. The gun was on the floor. It looked like the same gun Mike Shayne had kicked from the youthful punk's hand last night outside the social club.

Shayne touched nothing. He carefully searched the room, making sure he put everything back. All clothes were gone. The room had been essentially stripped, but tickets showed that Joey Gambin wasn't the hardworking type.

There were greasy decks of cards, dice, bookie slips. Some abandoned cuff links and tie clips made it look as if Joe Gambin had left in a hurry.

Shayne found the child's rubber mask in the closet on a high shelf.

He picked up the telephone and

told the clerk to call the police.

Then he searched the dead man. He found only a wallet, all but empty, with a driver's license made out to Carl Kling.

He sat down to wait for Painter and his men.

X

PETER PAINTER sat in his office and surveyed Mike Shayne with a certain relish. "Okay, his name was Carl Kling; we've got a record on him. A small one, he was small time. A couple of juvenile offenses, all violent, and some gambling raps, that's all. Now you tell me what you were doing in that room."

"I told you," Shayne snapped. "I'm looking for Frank Candia's papers. I got a tip about a guy named Joe Gambin. I went to the Cathcart Social Club over in Miami and found out where Gambin lived. I went there last night, and two guys took target practice at me. I was hit. I went back this morning, and found Kling."

Painter sneered. But Shayne knew that there was nothing the dapper little Chief of Detectives could do. The story accounted for all that Painter could prove. Painter would not ask him who the tip had come from, and if the Chief did, Shayne would only say that it had been anonymous.

"A swell yarn," Painter said. "Okay, I'll let you hang yourself. You think this Kling was the boy who robbed Candia?"

"He fits the description, and the mask was in the room."

Painter nodded. "Okay. Let's see what Candia has to say."

The Chief pressed a button on his intercom, snapped an order, and a uniformed man brought Frank Candia into the office. The lawyer mopped the sweat from his hands and face as usual, and Painter considered him.

Painter looked unfriendly. Shayne knew that this was how Painter always looked—the Chief felt that a hard look threw people on the defensive whether they had anything to hide or not.

"All right. You looked at the body?"

Candia nodded uneasily. "I looked."

"Is it the man who robbed and hit you?"

"What do you want me to say, Painter?" Candia said. "It could be. He's the right size. He was wearing black clothes like the ones they showed, and the mask is right, but I never saw the man himself. The look I got was pretty fast."

"Does the gun look right?"

"It looks like about the same gun. I'm no gun expert."

"It could be your man?"

"It could be. Did you find any of the loot? That'd be the real way to tell."

"Nothing in that apartment.

Shayne says he thinks Kling had a car. Maybe the stuff is there. Whoever killed him stood awful close."

"A friend?" Candia said, mopping his hands. "A partner?"

"Could be. Where were you last night?"

"When?" Candia said.

"All night."

Candia sweated. He looked at Shayne, but the redhead said nothing. Candia looked at Painter.

"I worked late, had dinner out with my wife—I can prove it—and got home about eleven o'clock. I didn't go out again. My wife went to bed about midnight. I stayed up working on a case. I went to bed about two A.M. I was still in bed when Shayne called me about eight o'clock this morning."

Painter studied a report in front of him. "Medical examiner says Kling died somewhere around six. So the only alibi you have is that you were in bed."

"You can't prove I wasn't," Candia said.

"Why can't I?" Painter said.

"Because I was!"

"So you say. Okay, you can go."

Shayne stood up to leave with Candia. Painter eyed the big redhead coldly.

"You don't have any better alibi, Shayne. Remember that," Painter said. "As far as I'm concerned your story stinks, and I've got my eye on you."

"As long as it's only your eye, it's okay," Shayne said curtly.

"I'll let you know when it's my arm," Painter snapped.

Shayne left it at that, and followed Frank Candia out. In the street the sweating lawyer looked at the detective inquiringly. Shayne rubbed at his chin.

"Was it the man, Candia? This Kling?"

"I told Painter the truth, Shayne. I can't be sure. He looks like the guy."

"Why would he be killed?" Shayne said. "For a few thousand dollars?"

"I don't know why they would go to any of that trouble unless they've got some scheme in mind about those stocks."

"Has anyone else contacted you?"

"No."

"Have you ever heard of a Joe Gambin?"

"No, never."

"Did you ever see Beth Brenner with a man?"

Candia mopped his brow, shook his head, then stopped. "Wait—there was this one time. At Manfredo's, at dinner. I don't go there much; it's out of my normal area. But I went there with a client, and I saw Beth and this young guy. Not tall, kind of slender, good-looking, dark. I didn't like the look of him, too smooth."

"You don't know his name?"

"I didn't ask."

"Maybe you should have," Shayne said. "Okay. Go back to the office and invent an errand for Miss Brenner. I want to see what she does. Make it about three o'clock. I'll get some lunch and do some other work."

"Okay. You think Beth is mixed up in this?"

"I think she's up to her nostrils in it," Shayne said bluntly.

Candia drove off, and Shayne went to his office over in Miami. Lucy Hamilton cried out when she saw his empty sleeve.

"It's still there, Angel," Shayne said wryly. "Just winged a little."

"How—" Lucy said, her brown eyes wide.

"I forgot to zig in time. One of them ended up a lot worse."

"You killed one, Michael?"

"I didn't. Someone did. Any calls?"

"One. He wouldn't leave his name, but he left a number."

"Let's have it, Angel."

Lucy Hamilton gave him the number. He didn't recognize it. In his private office he dialed the number. A hoarse voice whispered a wary hello. Augie The Dip.

"This is Shayne, Augie. Do you have something?"

"I don't know, Mike. You tell me. Word sort of hints like that Joe Gambin got a hand in that job. Hard word, not much said,

and that don't figure on a two-bit job for a punk like Gambin."

"There's a bonus for you," Shayne said.

"Yeah," the hoarse whisper said. "Okay. I'll lay it out—it don't smell right. Gambin got some pull in big places somewhere, and Joey Gambin never had that kind of pull nowhere."

"Any names?"

"Like a tomb. Some kind of deal is all I hear. Not the heist, something else. That's all."

"Keep listening. I'll drop the cash the usual way."

"I'm waitin'."

Shayne hung up and thought for a time. Then he saw he just had time to make his pay-off to Augie and get back to Candia's office after a quick lunch.

XI

WHEN BETH BRENNER emerged from the office building, Mike

Shayne was waiting. She went straight to her car. Candia had told Shayne when he called after lunch that Miss Brenner was delivering some papers to one of his clients, an old lady in a Miami mansion.

Shayne tailed the girl's car. She went across the causeway, straight to an old mansion in Miami. Shayne waited. Miss Brenner took her time. Suspicious, Shayne got out and worked his way to the house. He finally found the window he wanted. Beth Brenner was having tea!

A rich old lady who had few vititors was serving tea from a silver urn that would have served fifty, and probably had in the good old days when she had been young as well as rich. Beth Brenner looked like a trapped slave.

Shayne went back to his car and waited. Finally Beth Brenner came out. Shayne took up the trail again, but the girl went nowhere. She drove back across the Bay and straight to the Miradero Apartments. Shayne got out of his car. This time he did not go to the roof to watch. He followed the girl upstairs.

At her door he looked around, and he listened at the door. He heard only the sounds of one person, and the sudden voice of the television set. He pressed the bell. She came a little too fast, as if she expected someone else.

Her face told him that he had guessed right. When she saw him standing there her face could not conceal its disappointment.

"Yes?" she said coldly.

"Do you remember me, Miss Brenner? The insurance man from your office?"

"Of course, I remember now," she said, her voice not warming a degree. "What do you want?"

"A little talk."

"If it's about business, come to the office. I work nine to five."

"Do you?" Shayne said. "I had some of your after-hour work in mind."

She did not react visibly, but she reacted. The skin on her cool face seemed to tighten making her, somehow, less pretty than she was. Her eyes deadened, and her lips parted to show small, even teeth."

"I'm not sure what you mean, but come in," she said quietly.

She backed away from the doorway, and Shayne went in. The living room was very familiar. The television was on, but Beth Brenner didn't even glance at the set, or offer to turn it off.

She stood against the door and watched Shayne. "You're not an insurance man, are you?" she said.

"No," Shayne said. "My name's Shayne, Mike Shayne."

"You're investigating the robbery. A detective!"

"That's right. You want to tell me about it?"

She left the doorway after a

long minute of watching Shayne. Her lip quivered. She picked up a flat cigarette box and took out a cigarette. She lit it. Her hands shook. Shayne sat down in an elegant modern chair and watched the whole thing. Finally, she sat facing him.

"What do you want me to tell you, Mr. Shayne? I already told the police what little I know."

"You forget to mention Joe Gambin," Shayne said.

To that she reacted—openly. She jumped a foot in her seat and her face came apart. The skin sagged, the eyes were like scared rabbits, her complexion yellowed. She forgot to smoke the cigarette in her long fingers. A big tear welled up in her right eye and trickled down her face. She did not look pretty at all now—a plain girl with a marvelous body she did not know how to use.

"How—how did—" she stammered in a whisper.

"It's my work to find out things, Miss Brenner," Shayne said. "Now let's talk about Joey. Okay?"

She was silent. Shayne thought she was going to collapse. But there was iron in her. Slowly her face came back together and she nodded.

"All right. Do you think I'm pretty, Mr. Shayne?"

"Yes, in a way. You have a—"

"Good body. I know. But I'm not pretty. Not even my body. Do you know why? Because I don't think I'm pretty. That's a joke in a way, isn't it? I'm the reverse side of the coin, the girl who is fairly pretty but doesn't believe it."

"It happens," Shayne said.

"Yes, it does. So there you are. You see, I need men. I'm pretty enough. They like me, but I never seem to be able to hold one who comes looking for me. I don't know why. If I work with a man, or meet him at a party, I can't seem to unfreeze. So I thought, perhaps, if I could chase some man who I didn't know. Some stranger, anonymous as it were. You see?"

"So you went to the Cathcart Social Club."

"I went to Cathcart. It was awful. I went three times, and it was horrible. But the third time, I met Joey." She raised those scared eyes in a kind of wonder. "It happened. It worked, you know? I felt abandoned, free! I could make love to him. Easily, simply. He wasn't like the men I had known. He was rough, hard, an egotist. He allowed me to admire him."

She smiled as if at herself, or at Joey Gambin. "He thought he was so important, so big. He had no idea that everyone, especially women, didn't admire him. I could forget about myself. He had the ego for both of us. It was quite wonderful. Then—"

Shayne said, "Then? You fell for him?"

"Yes. I fell in love. Insane, wasn't it? A man like Joe. But to me, my man. I was going to marry him. I still would."

"Marry? That doesn't sound like the Joe Gambin I heard about."

She blazed up. "He loves me! You hear? It was his idea! He talked of marriage. He said we could get married as soon as—"

She stopped again. Her face was on the edge of falling into pieces once more. She held herself in tight control. Shayne made his voice gentle.

"As soon as he did something important, Beth?"

She nodded miserably. "Yes. Is it so obvious?"

"I know a lot of Joe Gambins. They live on wits and tricks. What was his trick?"

"He had a chance at a big business opportunity. He needed a few thousand dollars. Five thousand to be exact. Only a loan, of course."

"Of course. A short loan. He had prospects and needed the cash to put up his end of a really big deal, right? He could get married then. A legitimate deal. No one ever gave him a chance; it was his way out of a bad life. The chance to go straight with you and a vine-covered cottage."

"You make it sound so ludicrous, so sordid, Mr. Shayne," Beth Brenner said.

"I make it sound what it was," Shayne said bluntly. "What did you finally do? Agreed to rob your boss?"

"Of course not!" she cried, and then she smiled bitterly. "No, Joe was smarter than that. I'm not the type to accept the idea of a robbery of my own boss at once. Oh no, Joey was a lot smarter than that."

"He asked to 'borrow' a little for a short time?"

"Yes," she said, her voice again down to a whisper. "He didn't suggest I steal it. He only said he needed a few thousand and then he'd get the rest. He said if he could show just a thousand, lenders would take a chance on him."

"So you 'borrowed' a thousand from Candia's safe?"

She nodded miserably. "I faked a purchase order. Mr. Candia would never find out. He—trusts me. I took a thousand and gave it to Joey. But—"

"But he couldn't get any more, and he couldn't return the first thousand. Right?"

"Yes."

"A standard trick. When was this?"

"The day before the robbery," she said almost inaudibly.

Shayne signed. Such an old, old con. "Then he came to you and said he could solve the whole problem. He could get his money, and cover your embezzlement, at the same time. I gather you had no way of returning the thousand,

and Frank Candia would find out sooner or later?"

"Yes. An auditor would be in soon. Joe said he could handle it all if I'd help. He suggested the robbery. He said all I had to do was leave the bathroom window and door open. He said there was no risk, and I had no choice."

"So you went for it?"

"Yes. What else could I do? I loved Joey! We were to be married. I would be sent to prison if the missing thousand was discovered!"

Shayne nodded. "He had you boxed. Did you know Kling, too?"

"No, not then. I met him that day. I had to tell him just how the office and building were laid out, all about the bathroom and all that. He was so young."

"Was is right," Shayne said. "He's dead."

Her hand flew to her mouth and she made a strangled sound. Shayne did not have to guess what was on her mind—Joe Gambin. Her eyes were frightened, but not for herself this time.

Shayne said, "You went looking for Joe last night. Why?"

"He was supposed to call me, come to me, as soon as his deal was settled. He—he hasn't come."

"No, and he won't, Beth. You did what he needed. He doesn't need you anymore."

"No! He loves me! Something's gone wrong!"

"Maybe, and maybe not. Kling tried to put some kind of pressure on Frank Candia, for some reason. I think your Joey didn't tell you all he had in mind. Face it, Beth, you've been used and dumped. I don't know, maybe the police and the prosecutor will go easy on you if you tell everything now."

"I can't hurt Joe! I know he'll come for me!"

"A running thief? Is that what you want?"

There was a silence. A long silence that hung over the room. She bit her lip, and then she shuddered. Her eyes were as naked as any eyes Shayne had ever seen when she looked at him now.

"Maybe I want anything, Mr. Shayne. Anything is better than nothing. Any love."

"Beth," Shayne said slowly, "he counted on that. He's still counting on it. Last night I saw him. He tried to kill me. He probably killed Kling. He's in the city, working on his scheme, killing, and he counts on you keeping silent."

She shivered again. "What do you want me to do?"

"Tell your story to the police. Or tell Candia first, let him act as your lawyer. I think he wants to help."

"He's a good man," she whispered," and I—I failed him."

"He'll understand, or try to."

This time the silence was deeper, but shorter. Beth Brenner nodded.

"All right. I'll tell Mr. Candia," she said, and then, suddenly, she smiled. A warm smile. "You know, it's odd, but I feel better already, just agreeing to tell!"

"You've been under a strain. You'll have to pay something, Beth, but maybe not too much this time."

"What will you do?"

"Find Joe Gambin," Shayne said grimly. "Now make your call."

She nodded. "I've learned one thing, anyway."

"What's that?"

"Love doesn't come cheap or easy."

Shayne said nothing. He waited until he heard her call Frank Candia. Then he left. He waited outside in his car until he saw Candia drive up and run up to her apartment. She had not come out.

Satisfied, and out of police involvement, Shayne drove off. He had a hunch he knew where someone knew more about Joe Gambin than he did.

XII

IN THE TWILIGHT The Cathcart Social Club looked even shabbier. A few cars were parked in front of the old frame house. Some eager clients came early to the fray, or maybe they just didn't have anywhere else to go.

Mike Shayne parked, and started up the walk toward the front door. He heard a sound behind the club, in the alley. He moved into the cover of the building and peered around. A long, black limousine stood behind the club. It had just slid silently up, almost silently, and two men sat in the front seat. Two hard men.

They did not see the redhead. He was hidden by a thick hibiscus, but could see well enough through its branches. He watched and waited. For some seconds nothing happened. Then the back door of the car opened and a tall, skinny man stepped out.

The skinny man looked up and down the alley, looked all around, even up at the roof of the club. Then he turned and nodded inside. Another man stepped out. Shayne almost made a noise.

The second man was small, not broad but somehow powerful in the way he walked. Dressed in a light gray silk suit that had cost at least $500, the man walked into the rear of the Cathcart Club without looking right or left.

He didn't have to. He knew

that many well-paid eyes were doing his looking for him. He had no fears; he paid well for men of the kind who could assure him that no danger would ever touch him. Their lives made that promise.

Shayne had seen him only three times before, but he was not a man you forgot. Cosimo Pintera. *The* Cosimo Pintera: the boss. The boss of many, many things, and all of them illegal. A killer, but not for a long time now, and anyone who could prove it was long dead. A racketeer. A big man. Pintera! This, then, was the big man Augie The Dip had said word had it was protecting Joey Gambin?

Why? For a $5000 heist? No, never, and more than ever Shayne sensed that there was more to all this than a simple robbery. There had to be more! The girl, Beth Brenner, had been well set-up, and not for peanuts. For what, then?

Shayne stood unmoving where he was. Pintera's hoods were still in the alley, alert and waiting for the first hint of any trouble. They were not men given to asking questions before they went into action. There was nothing Shayne could do but wait.

It was a short wait. Less than three minutes after he had gone into the social club, Cosimo Pintera came out. He went to his car, looking nowhere again, not even at the tall, skinny number-one man. He slid into the rear seat of the limousine. The skinny bodyguard got in. The other two got in. The car made a slow, careful turn so as not to mar the finish, and eased away along the dark alley like some deadly black dinosaur.

Shayne went into the club. The fun-seekers sat in sullen silence, all heads turning again when the redhead entered as if all heads were on the same neck. Shayne strode straight to Cathcart's office and went in without knocking. The muscular Luis jumped toward him.

"Out! You got no—"

Shayne put a cold glance at the welterweight. "Don't try it, Luis. You're too small and out of shape."

"You sure, peeper?" Luis said calmly. A pro, he didn't needle.

Cathcart said, "Okay, Luis. Cool it. What's on your mind this time, Shayne?"

"Two things," Shayne snapped. "One, you must have tipped off half the city to set me up after I left here. You must have a direct line to Joe Gambin. You better start talking because it's murder now."

Cathcart didn't blink an eye. "I don't know about any murder. A shamus comes looking for a man I know, I let the word get around. So what?"

"Where's Gambin now, Cath-

cart? He's wanted. You're hiding a fugitive."

"I don't know where he is. I'm hiding no one. What's your second thing?"

"Cosimo Pintera," Shayne said simply.

Both Cathcart and Luis seemed to edge away as if something evil and dangerous was crawling on the floor between them and Shayne. Maybe something was.

Cathcart said, "Beat it, Shayne."

"What's your connection to Pintera?"

"A friend."

"Pintera doesn't have friends."

Luis said, "Mr. Cathcart said beat it."

"What's Pintera's connection to Joe Gambin?"

"Ask him," Cathcart said.

"Then there is a connection?" the redhead said.

"I didn't say there was."

"Pintera doesn't come calling on a cheap crook like you, Cathcart, without a damned good reason," Shayne said. "I figure you told him I was looking for Gambin, and he came to find out what was what."

"Figure what you like, peeper," Luis said. "Now out!"

They faced him, and Shayne knew he was going to get no more from them, not with Cosimo Pintera in the picture. It wasn't healthy to talk about Cosimo Pintera, and they knew it. So he just looked them up and down, carefully, and then he spun on his heel and walked out.

In his car he drove away toward the causeway into Miami Beach. Just before he reached the causeway he realized that he was no longer alone. He had acquired a companion—a jaunty blue sedan no one would have suspected of tailing anyone.

He drove to the office of Frank Candia. The lawyer was still there even though darkness was falling. He wiped at his hands when he saw Shayne.

Candia was agitated.

"She told me the whole story," Candia said. "The poor, stupid kid. I had to take her in. They've got an all-points out for Joe Gambin."

"She's in jail?"

"No, out on bail. I put it up. First offense and she's co-operating."

"How's she taking it?"

"Bad, but they'll get Gambin and that'll end it. She says he has the papers, so that about ends your job. You did good."

"Not so good. Gambin's still loose, and your papers are still floating around. I want to know why they contacted you, what they wanted."

"Beth says she thinks they thought the papers and the stocks are worth more than they are. She heard them talking about selling them back to me. Like you figured. It's all over, Shayne. Send me

your bill, and that's it. I'll take care of Beth."

"Just like that? You say it's over?"

"Isn't it?" Candia said, his eyes wide in surprise.

"I don't know. You say it is. Are you taking me off the case now?"

"Why go on now that we know the story? Painter says it's only a matter of time until he picks up Gambin now. Kling's dead, Gambin is running, and Beth told her story."

"I guess so," Shayne said. "I'll send my bill."

"Good, and thanks a lot, Shayne. You found out what I wanted."

"That's my job," the redhead said.

He left Candia still drying his hands on the ever-present kleenex. Down in the parking lot it was dark now, and Shayne sat in his car thinking. He saw the jaunty blue sedan in his rearview mirror. So Cosimo Pintera was watching him. That did not exactly fill him with surprise. And somewhere in Pintera's concern was the key.

Shayne got out of his car and walked straight to the blue sedan. The squat man behind the wheel was reading a newspaper as Shayne walked up. The man didn't look at him. Shayne leaned at the open window.

"You always read in a parking lot?" Shayne said.

The man did not turn his head. "Beat it."

"And make you work tailing me? I wouldn't be so cruel. What would Pintera say if you lost me?"

"You want a broken face?"

Shayne laughed. "Dream on, punk. I'll pluck you like a chicken."

The man put down the paper, and his right hand snaked for his armpit. Shayne had his wrist in a flash. The cords of his arm stood out as he held the squat man's wrist so that the man could move it neither forward nor back. Sweat stood out on the punk's face as he strained to break Shayne's grip with only the power of his one arm. It would have been a sign of weakness to use both hands.

"All right. Let's go see the boss," Shayne said when it was clear that the squat man could not break his grip.

He released the man's hand, walked around the car and back to his own car without looking back. It wasn't bravado. He knew that one of Pintera's boys would do nothing without orders from Pintera, and the squat punk knew he knew it. In his car he waited for the blue sedan to lead the way.

The blue car drove off with Mike Shayne behind it.

XIII

COSIMO PINTERA worked out of a small club in downtown

Miami. He lived in a mansion in an exclusive area, but no one went there without an invitation or a warrant. So the blue sedan led Mike Shayne to the club, and the squat man got out without a glance back and walked inside. Shayne followed.

"Hold it!"

Just inside the door a big, powerful man put out a massive paw to halt Shayne. The squat man didn't turn around.

"It's okay, Jiggs. This is Mike Shayne. He wants to see the boss. He's a wise peeper. Let him pass."

The giant stepped back. The squat one led Shayne away from the main rooms where the customers had begun to arrive, and along a side corridor. Shayne saw no guards, heard no messages, but he knew that Cosimo Pintera was already fully aware of where he was and what he was doing.

The squat one stopped, pointed to an unmarked door, and went away without a word. Shayne opened the door. He stood in a second corridor, small and narrow.

A silent, neat man appeared from a curtained recess and deftly patted him. The man removed his automatic, motioned him on toward another unmarked door.

Shayne went through this door and stood in a large, quiet, air-conditioned, windowless, carpeted office in front of a smiling Cosimo Pintera. The tall, skinny number-one gunman leaned on a wall.

"Hello, Shayne," Pintera said. "Guys I tail don't usually come to see me."

"You want to know what I know, I want to know what you know," Shayne said. "Why waste everyone's time? You've got an overhead to keep down like everyone else."

Pintera laughed. "That sounds like the basis of a deal. Go ahead, talk."

Pintera, for all his deadly past, was the essence of the new type of racket boss—businesslike, educated, well-spoken. Only a cop with the record in front of him would have believed what this small man in the silk suit was.

"Cathcart told you I'm looking for Joe Gambin. Word says Gambin has an edge in some powerful place. I can put two and two together. I'll lay out what I know. Joe Gambin and a kid named Kling set up a girl named Beth Brenner to help them in a heist. They got five thousand dollars and some non-negotiable paper. Now one of them's dead, Kling. The girl's told her story. What's your interest?"

"That's all you know? Gambin and Kling pulled a heist with the girl inside?"

"That's all, except that Kling at least seemed to think he had something to talk about to Frank Candia, the victim."

Pintera considered. "Okay. I don't know any more than you do, in fact less. I didn't know about the girl being the inside. Why should I? I didn't even know Gambin had a heist in mind. I learned about it after. I don't know where Gambin is now, or what he did after the job."

"What's your connection?"

The skinny gunman shifted against his wall. Pintera half-glanced toward the gunman, then looked back at Shayne.

"Okay, I got no reason to hide it. About two months ago Joe Gambin came to me. I knew him around. He'd heard I had a deal cooking, a big deal. It don't matter what, okay? Well, he wanted to handle the deal. It's one of those affairs where I got to put up a lot of cash. So I made Joey an offer. He comes up with half the cash, he gets forty percent of the deal."

"You're a fair dealer," Shayne said dryly.

Pintera raised an eyebrow. "You don't think that was a fair deal? Look, the money we pay for the deal is only part of what I do. The party don't want to sell out, so to make him even take the deal I have to put on the pressure. My pressure, plus cash, makes the deal. Afterwards, I give the protection. So fifty percent to make forty percent is a fair deal for Joey. He jumped at it."

"And went out to get the money?"

"I guess so," Pintera said indifferently.

Shayne said, "I don't figure five thousand dollars buys him forty percent of any deal you set up."

Pintera laughed again. "It wouldn't buy him a smell."

"How much did he need?"

Pintera thought for a time. "Okay, why not? Joey's out now, I don't take on dumb killers. He had to come up with one hundred thousand dollars, rock bottom. To get the full forty percent he needed a lot more."

Shayne was silent, it was his turn to think. "What made Gambin think he could find that kind of money?"

"I wouldn't know. I didn't figure he could, but he said he knew how to do it."

Shayne thought for a time more, then he stood up. "Thanks, Pintera."

"Any time, Shayne," the small racketeer said.

Shayne saw the faintest of nods from the racketeer, and that was the okay for him to leave. The

nod was for the skinny gunman. Without that nod, Shayne would not be leaving—at least not over the live body of the skinny killer.

No one even looked at Shayne as he retraced his steps, but he knew that unseen eyes were on him every step of the way. Once outside, he did not hesitate. He drove to Frank Candia's office again. He pulled into the deserted parking lot in the dark—and saw the gray coupe.

It was not in the lot. It was parked in the shadows up the street from the entrance to the building. Shayne watched the coupe. He could try to take Joe Gambin, if it was Gambin in the car, but he did not move. There was more to the robbery than anyone had revealed, and what was Gambin doing outside Frank Candia's office?

Mike Shayne waited.

Ten minutes later Frank Candia came out and hurried to his car. Candia drove out of the lot. The gray coupe pulled away and followed. Shayne made the third in the line.

Candia drove across the causeway and turned north. The coupe followed, then seemed to vanish. Shayne continued after Frank Candia. The lawyer drove fast and steadily north until they were in the more open suburbs of the city.

Candia pulled off the highway on to a secondary road and followed this for some miles. Then the lawyer turned into a small motel. Shayne drove on past. The *No Vacancy* sign was on, yet Candia had stopped there. As he passed the last unit, Shayne saw the gray coupe parked behind it.

He did not have to think too hard to know what was going on. Candia had come to the motel to meet someone, and that someone, Gambin or someone else, had watched Candia leave his office to be sure that the lawyer was alone.

Shayne made a U-turn and drove back to the motel. Candia's car was now parked near the last unit. There was light inside the unit. Shayne pulled in and got out. He sneaked up to the last unit and circled it. All the shades were drawn. The redhead tried to listen near a window, but all he heard was a low, angry rumble of voices.

He looked around. The night was dark and silent. He drew his automatic, swearing to himself over his useless left arm, and stepped softly around to the rear door of the unit. He studied the lock. It was an easy lock. He was reaching for his ring of special keys, swearing again at his one-handedness that made it necessary for him to slip the automatic into his belt while he used the keys, when he heard the front door slam.

He slipped his keys back into his pocket, drew the automatic from his belt and ran around to

the front. Frank Candia was climbing into his car. Shayne had to make a quick decision. Had Candia made a deal? He made his choice. He hurried to his car and followed Candia out of the motel lot.

The lawyer drove fast as usual, straight back toward the main highway. Shayne abandoned his caution now; he didn't care if Candia saw him. He pressed down on the gas and raced after the lawyer.

Candia spotted him. There was no doubt. The lawyer's car seemed to leap away as Candia put on the speed. Shayne stuck close but he no longer gained. Candia swept out on to the highway and raced south toward Miami proper.

But the task of keeping up to a man after he had spotted you was hopeless on a crowded modern highway. Twice Shayne lost the lawyer in the press of traffic, only to pick him up again. The third time Candia was gone.

Shayne went on past three off-ramps and then gave up. Candia had shaken him. Sooner or later he would find the lawyer, but that could be too late—unless he could pick up the other man at the motel. He U-turned, illegally, amidst bawling horns from irate motorists, and drove back to the motel.

As he approached he slowed, and swung in almost silently. Only the gravel crunched under his wheels, and he heard the shots loud in the night.

Shots from the direction of the last unit.

Shayne hit his brakes where he was, cut the engine, and leaped out already running. He reached the last unit, his automatic out. A shot from the window sent him sprawling in the gravel. He scrambled for the cover of a tree, his automatic ready.

In the other units people were yelling, running out. The manager was standing uneasily in front of the office, while inside through the window Shayne saw a woman on the telephone.

In the last unit there was no sign of movement now.

Cautiously, Shayne raised up. No shots. The redhead took a breath, and, bent low, ran for the door of the last unit. It was locked. He kicked it in, and jumped inside crouched, his automatic held to turn with his body.

The room was empty—except for a man sprawled on his back on the floor. Joe Gambin, as dead as Kling had been, and from the same cause.

Shayne looked down at the dark, handsome man. Gambin had been shot twice at close range and through the heart—exactly the same as Kling.

The room had been partially searched, hurriedly. The back door was open. Shayne looked out but he knew it was useless. Whoever

had shot at him and gone out the back way had had the cover of the noise in the motel and plenty of time.

But not enough time to find whatever it was the killer had wanted.

Shayne began to search. The police would be here soon. He did not think that the motel was in Miami city limits, and he did not want to have to make explanations to a local force.

He searched fast, with one ear open for the sound of approaching police.

There wasn't much to search. Joe Gambin had only been passing through. Shayne stopped to think. Whatever Gambin had that was so valuable, he would have wanted close at hand. When a man is in Gambin's position he wants to know he can move fast if he has to—fast and light.

Shayne studied the body. Then he bent and made a careful frisk of the dead man. He found the wallet with nothing in it anyone could want. The pockets were empty.

He was ready to strip the body, police or no police, when he found it.

In the left shoe, under the inner sole. A key to a pay locker. Shayne took the key, and slipped out the same way as the killer. No one tried to stop him. He circled around from the back and reached his car from a different direction.

XIV

EVEN IN MIAMI there were not too many places with pay lockers. But there were enough. There were most hotels in Miami and Miami Beach, all the train stations, the bus depots, and the airport. It was going to be largely a matter of luck.

Only he could work on some hunches. Joey Gambin had been expecting to make over $100,000 from something. It had to be something connected to the robbery of Frank Candia's office. It looked like some kind of squeeze on Candia. So it wasn't likely that Gambin had been planning to leave town.

That left the hotels. If Gambin had a reason to feel he had to hide something in a locker, he would probably have hidden it at the first opportunity. People were like that. And probably the moment he had decided to hide it was right after he had killed Kling, or right after Kling had been killed if Gambin wasn't the killer.

Mike Shayne got a map and circled all the hotels near Gambin's room at The Flamingo Hotel. He wondered. Did The Flamingo Hotel have pay lockers?

The Flamingo Hotel did have them. Shayne found them in the rear of the lobby, near a seedy barber shop and drugstore. The number of the key matched a top

locker. Shayne opened it. Human beings are all the same, and their minds move in well-used grooves. Joe Gambin had used the lockers he knew best.

At first the locker seemed empty. Shayne swore. Then he reached up and in and felt around. His hands closed on a small, thin book with a cloth cover.

He looked at the book. It was a bank book. On a New York bank. The name of the owner was Calvin Frank. But Shayne had a pretty good hunch that Calvin Frank didn't exist, and just who the book really belonged to.

The balance was $980,000.

Shayne stared at it for some time. He was beginning to understand the whole thing now. He looked around. No one seemed to be watching him. He put the book into his pocket and went back to his car. He drove slowly, watchfully home to his apartment.

He went up to his rooms and called Frank Candia. There was a pause and a click and Mike Shayne knew that Candia was not in his office. The direct line shifted and after a few moments a woman answered.

"Yes?"

"Frank Candia, please," Shayne said.

"May I ask who's calling?"

She sounded like a nice woman, not young. Probably a gentle, motherly woman. Just the kind that marry the Frank Candia's of the world when the Candia's are young, struggling lawyers. They love their husbands, and they never ask what their husbands are doing to make the money.

"Mike Shayne. Tell him it's urgent. Tell him I know."

"You know," she said. "Very well."

While she was gone, and he was waiting, he lit a cigarette. She came back.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Shayne, but Frank seems to have gone out. I do expect him back at any moment."

"Okay. Tell him I'm coming out. And tell him what I said."

Shayne hung up. A trap? Maybe, but then maybe he wanted a trap.

He drove once more to Frank Candia's fine house in a good but not exclusive section. There was light in the house when he got there, and Candia's car was parked in the driveway. Shayne parked a half a block beyond and walked cautiously.

In the night nothing happened. It was a quiet, residential section, where the children had advantages and did not play on the streets at night.

Shayne circled the house, checking, but saw no trap.

He rang the front doorbell, his hand on his automatic that was in his belt now. With only one hand in use, he would take no

chances. Candia himself answered the door.

"You know?" Candia said simply.

"I know," Shayne said. He showed the slim little bankbook.

Candia nodded as if he had known all along that his secret could not be kept. The lawyer was sweating more than ever, and the night was not hot. His eyes were on the book.

"All right. Come in."

Candia led Shayne into a small, quiet study. Shayne closed the door. Candia turned:

"Okay, Shayne. How much?"

XV

MIKE SHAYNE said, "How much is it worth to you?"

Candia sat down and studied the redhead. "So you do want money? You, too."

"Don't we all want money, Candia?"

"Yes, we do. Okay, I have to have it. I'll pay one hundred thousand dollars, one shot, nothing more. Once I pay you I cover my tracks and no one proves anything."

"How much did Joe Gambin want?"

Candia mopped his brow. "I'm not telling you that. If you got the book from him he probably told you."

"He didn't tell me anything, Candia, and you know it. He's dead. You killed him, just as you killed Kling!"

Frank Candia stared, then seemed to sway in his chair. He held onto the desk. Shayne watched his hands. He reached for a drawer.

"No! Keep your hands where I can see them!" Shayne said.

Candia blinked. "Kleenex, that's all."

Shayne walked and opened the drawer. There was only a box of kleenex. Shayne backed off and let Candia take one.

"You're crazy, Shayne! I'm no killer. I couldn't be."

"You're the best prospect I have. Convince me! Tell me the whole thing!"

Candia nodded, licked his lips. "The thief got the book. It was in the safe. I had—I hoped he didn't know what it was. I hired you to get it back, but I couldn't tell you what I wanted back, could I?"

"It's stolen money, Candia? Embezzled? From your estate trusts?"

"In a way it, may be, yes, but not exactly."

"What is it—exactly?" Shayne said bluntly.

"I—I borrowed from the trusts, the estates. I lent it out at interest. I returned the principal, and what's in the book is the interest. Ten years of interest!!"

Shayne felt ill. "Loan-sharking?"

"No! Legitimate business loans!"

"I'll bet. So you lent money not yours, and pocketed the interest it earned. Since it wasn't your money, the interest isn't yours either. Plain theft. And unreported on your tax form, right?"

Candia nodded. "Yes."

"Banked under a phony name because, one, you didn't pay tax, and, two, on what you make you couldn't have made that much money, so any smart accountant would have spotted your little game with other people's money in a second. An old penny-ante racket given a big twist. Just hold back the money for a little while and use clients' money as your own!"

Candia said nothing. It was all true. Shayne had seen men who handled other men's money do it before, on a small scale, to pay rent and to eat while waiting to get money of their own. But Candia had raised it to a high level of financial theft. He didn't take his client's money; he only used it and took its power to make money for himself.

"All right. What happened when you found the book gone?"

"I was scared. I was sure some thief had it who didn't know what a bomb it was for me. I couldn't tell anyone, could I? I didn't want to try to approach the thief myself, because if he didn't know what he had I'd only alert him."

"So you hired me, hoping I'd find all your papers and never guess what the book was."

"That's it."

"Only the thief knew what he had?"

"Yes. He called me, and that's when I went to meet him. You scared him off. I sweated until I was contacted tonight. I went out to that motel. This Gambin said he wanted two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. I told him he was crazy. He laughed, and said he knew I'd pay it, and then he'd leave me alone. I told him I'd have to think."

"And doubled back and killed him!"

"No!"

Shayne watched the lawyer. "When Kling called you the first time, did he know all about the book?"

"Yes. They must have know all along."

"Yeah," Shayne said. "That was what they really wanted to steal, taking the five thousand was win-

dow dressing. It was that bankbook all along, Candia."

Candia mopped at his face. "What I don't understand is how they found out about the book."

"I understand," Shayne said, and he heard it!

A noise, small, in the next room. A faint noise, stealthy. He drew his automatic and watched Candia. The lawyer sweated.

XVI

THE SOFT, QUIET sound moved closer to the door that connected the study to the next room. Mike Shayne looked at Candia, whispered, "Locked?"

"No," Candia breathed.

"Get down. Keep talking," Shayne whispered. "Say you'll pay."

Candia nodded, spoke loudly. "All right, I'll pay it, Shayne. You have the book?"

"I've got it," Shayne said. "You get the money. I'll keep the book until I see the cash. You know where to reach me."

The redhead turned and walked to the door, stepping heavily. He opened it and went out into the hall. He passed the door to the next room on his way to the front door. When he was a few feet past the door to the room beside the study, he heard it click and swing open.

He dove for the stairs, drawing his automatic as he fell. He hit on his wounded arm, grimaced, and faced back looking through the bannisters of the stairs.

"Drop it, Beth!" Shayne snapped.

Beth Brenner, her cool face as tight as stretched steel, stood in the doorway to the room beside the study.

She had a pistol in both hands. It was a big gun, a Colt. It was aimed straight at Shayne.

"Drop it, Beth!" Shayne said again.

Frank Candia stood at the study door, out of the line of any fire, mopping at his dripping brow. Shayne watched the girl. She seemed to be in a trance, the gun still held out before her in both hands.

"It's all over, Beth," Shayne said. "You planned it all; you set it up. Your whole story was a lie. You didn't get conned by Joe Gambin. You fooled both of them, Gambin and Kling. You were the one who found out about Frank Candia's bank book and knew he could be blackmailed to buy it back."

"Did I?" she said, the first words she had spoken. Her voice was harsh, cracked, raw.

"But you're through now. Drop the gun."

She blinked. "I killed them, both of them. They wanted a share. They were dangerous. Once I had the book, Mr. Candia would never tell. I killed them. All I

needed was the book and I was safe."

"Maybe take a small conviction as the inside accomplice," Shayne said. "But now we know, don't we?"

"Yes," she said, "you know. "I've killed twice."

Her voice was almost matter-of-fact. But Shayne sensed, heard faintly, the edge of insanity in it. He ducked. Her pistol roared twice. Both slugs whined over his head and smashed into the stair wall.

Mike Shayne aimed. "Drop it! Beth!"

"I've killed two," she said, and began to walk straight at Shayne, the pistol in both hands before her. She fired again.

Shayne shot twice. He aimed for her pistol hand. He was so close to her he couldn't miss.

One of the two heavy .45 slugs almost tore her hand off. She was hurled against the wall, feet off the ground, and she slid down and lay still.

An impossible silence filled the house. Frank Candia came out into the hall. He looked down at the girl. Shayne looked at Candia.

"Your wife?"

"I sent her out earlier," Candia said. "Well, that does it."

"That does it all," Shayne said. He started for the telephone to call Painter, and then call for an ambulance.

Candia said behind him, "My book? Can I have my book? I know you're no blackmailer. Give me the book, Shayne. Take a reward."

Shayne didn't turn. "The book's evidence, Candia. The book tells the story. Without it Peter Painter would never believe it all."

"You can fix it with him. You can think of a story."

"No," Shayne said, and he turned, his gray eyes like steel nails. "I wouldn't if I could. You're a thief, Candia, and people are dead because of your theft. They weren't much, but they were people."

Candia croaked, "Half! Take half! I'll go to prison!"

"Yeah, you will," Shayne said, "It's over for you, too."

Shayne turned again and went to the telephone. Behind him, Frank Candia sat down on the floor.

YOU CAN BUY "MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE" EVERYWHERE

Strange, deadly was his vigil in the night—for Murder strode at his side.

Runners in the Park

by JAMES McKIMMEY

THE TWILIGHT OF late August became pink and then yellow. The first lights were turned on in homes across the wide sweep of the California city of San Guido.

A light wind blew through the orchards as well as across the golden fields there.

Vic Scanlon, whose small restaurant was on the corner of 21st and Elm Streets, across the avenue from Devil's Park, scraped his grill, staring across the board where he placed plates ready for serving. He was studying the shift of hips of the dark, pretty girl who was wiping the counter. Minutes before, she had closed and locked the front door and fitted the *closed* sign against glass. Now, Scanlon thought with pleasure, he had her alone.

"Come on back," he said in a booming voice that bounced echoingly around the counter, stool and booths. "We'll talk a little." He grinned, a giant middle-aged man whose chef's hat further extended his height.

He was fat, but there was a great deal of muscle beneath. His face was round and always appeared to be freshly sunburned, though that was his normal complexion. His eyes were small and fast, and they gave him a look that often intimidated the shy who came here to eat.

The girl's hand stopped its motion and poised over the counter. Mex, Scanlon thought, the first he'd ever employed. But she was ripe and luscious, a small girl with firm-looking breasts, who was graceful and tending toward shyness, who owned an oblique manner of mystery that somehow fascinated him.

Because the Mexican population had moved across town like a slow-flowing river until they were living, now, within blocks of this side of Devil's Park, he'd decided that he might as well take their business. And the girl's presence hadn't hurt that, he'd found. But short-order business was all he wanted from them—and monkey business with the girl. And they could stay on this side of the park. They were never going to move into the neighborhood on the other side, where he owned his own home.

"Come back here," he grunted.

"I must finish this."

"I'll put a steak on for you. We'll have a couple of drinks, then—"

"I told you last night I could not." Her hand went into motion again, gold wedding ring flashing.

"Tell your old man I asked you home for a couple of drinks?"

"I told him."

Laughter rumbled up from Scanlon's massive belly. "He didn't come around and bust me in the jaw, did he?"

"He is a gentle and studious man."

"Fresh out of shyster school. A hot-damn lawyer. But you're working for me, aren't you?"

"He has been out of school only a short time. We need all the money we can get. That is why I am

here." She straightened and turned to look at him with steady black eyes.

She had pride, he thought, and she knew how to be wary. But she never spoke any way other than politely to him, though at times he'd suspected a faint tone of contempt. Yet she had not become visibly angry at any time since she'd become his waitress—not even last night, when he'd made it clear that he wanted her to come home with him for one specific purpose.

That was why he persisted, because he believed that, despite her young marriage to a beginning lawyer named Jorge Gomez, despite her stated refusal to accompany him home, she truly was interested in Vic Scanlon. He'd seen her husband several times, when he'd dropped her off from their old Volkswagen sedan: a frail young man with long hair and very large eyes which had never looked anything but scared. He would make some lawyer, all right, Scanlon thought with amusement. Some lover too!

She wanted someone like Scanlon, he was certain of that. He suspected that she had asked for the job simply because she'd seen him walk large and strong in the district, proudly answering to no master but himself. This was the sort of man a girl like Constanza Gomez would want, wouldn't she?

"Turn down the slats of the blinds," he said. "Let's have a drink."

"I am a respectable woman, Mr. Scanlon. I am happily married, devoted to my husband."

"That successful lawyer husband of yours," he said sarcastically.

"He will be, one day. He is not afraid of the tests ahead. Already he is taking on responsibilities. I intend to help."

"Each man for himself," Scanlon stated shortly. "Before my wife died, I never let her hold my hand. A man who's got to fall back on any woman isn't one a real woman wants." He rubbed his nose with a fist and examined her hopefully.

"I am a real woman," she said softly, face dark and rich and flawless in the harsh, bright lighting. "My man does not fall back on me. But I shall be there if he wishes to. That is how it is, senor."

Disappointment turned Scanlon's outlook dark. He felt his ever-ready and vicious temper pulsing. A white scar running along the upper part of his right cheek was evidence of a previous flaring of anger. He owned other such mementos, on his body. But none of them meant that he had ever lost a physical contest; they were all victory marks.

"Tell the green bag to study up on assault and battery," he rumbled sullenly. "I don't like the way he smiles."

"We do not want trouble, se-

nor," the girl said, a note of entreaty now in her voice. "I wish only to do my work well for you, earn my salary and contribute to that which Jorge and I want from this life. Do you not understand? Please, Mr. Scanlon. We are human beings like yourself."

He turned abruptly and got a thick steak from the refrigerator. He slapped it on the grill, not looking at her any more. He heard her getting her purse from beneath the counter and turning the blinds, then unlocking the door and leaving. Moments later there was the unmistakable sound of Jorge Gomez's pipeless Volks roaring away.

Human beings, she'd said.

He didn't believe it.

As the steak sizzled against the hot metal, Scanlon chopped head lettuce. With a palm, he brushed the results into a salad bowl and placed the bowl on the counter. He set up a plate and silverware and added a container of oil and one of vinegar. He turned the steak and removed a bottle of Scotch from a cupboard. He poured a water glass full and drank, watching the cooking steak with his small, bright-steel eyes.

He had been thinking all day of how it would be with Constanza Gomez. Now he was left with nothing but frustrating denial. She wanted him. Why did she fight that?

He finished his glass of whiskey, poured another and deftly forked steak to plate. He balanced his giant heft on a stool and ate, sipping Scotch between bites.

He could feel the liquor now and that was fine. It was what he wanted: to drink good Scotch and eat good meat. He paused to mix oil and vinegar with the lettuce and then devoured the salad swiftly. This was the life he desired and would fight to protect—freedom to work at his own business, in his own fashion, depending totally on his own decisions to guide his every motion.

When he'd finished the steak, he sat with a little Scotch left in the glass, thinking back over the years when he had not always owned the freedom he now so treasured. Twenty-five years ago he'd been required to leave the small town in Kansas where he'd grown up and enter the Army at Fort Leavenworth. That had been followed by three bad years.

He had, before he'd been inducted, learned his trade as a short-order cook. And so he'd become a mess sergeant in a Georgia camp almost without effort and in a matter of weeks. He'd pursued his responsibility with zeal, making life entirely miserable for those who were required to serve under him; he'd never had to go overseas and fight in any sort of combat.

The restrictions of service life had been suffocating, making him feel as though his brain would

burst. He had been and would always be a free spirit, who would die if tightly confined. He often broke into hopeless tears deep in the night.

But because he had a room of his own at the end of one of the barracks in that camp, no one had ever found out about that, including all of those he'd beaten badly in provoked brawls after drinking gallons of PX beer.

After he'd been discharged, he'd made another wrong move. He'd married Lila Kitchell.

She'd been reasonably pretty then, with that kind of healthy body owned by a lot of Kansas farm girls. After a steady diet of Savannah camp followers she appealed to him strongly. He hadn't seen any reason then why he shouldn't have her all of the time. So they'd got married across the river in Kansas City.

For a time it wasn't even half bad. She was, after all, the one who'd suggested that they come West, find a new town and use the money he'd saved in the service to open up his own restaurant, just like this one. She'd had all the faith in the world in him, in the beginning, and so they'd come to San Guido. This place had become a reality.

But with all things, including even only half-bad things, come drawbacks. Once again he began to feel stifling restrictions. He discovered, finally, that the limitations employed on a man in marriage were not much different from those employed by the United States Army.

Lila began using various methods to gain her own way with him. Not speaking. Pouting. Refusing love. Cooking things he didn't like. Whining about his drinking. Putting on fake sicknesses, when she was trying to get him to do something or not do something.

The last tactic was one of the reasons why, when she did get truly sick, he didn't call a doctor sooner. The other reason was because he thought that he could handle it himself.

The doctor was finally called, but she was dying then. Well, he thought, maybe she did die of pneumonia created out of a lack of proper medical attention. The doctor had told him that and read him off good. But, on the other hand, that sawbones looked like a stubborn quack who would easily lie to cover up his own inefficiency.

No, he told himself now, drink-

ing the last of the Scotch, that was probably a lie. Lila just got herself wore out and her heart quit ticking and that was it. It didn't matter that he'd waited so long to phone for that doctor. He'd made soup and tea for her and fed her right there in bed. What more could have been done? It was fate. Chance. The way of things.

She'd left him a nice chunk of insurance which he'd banked and kept intact. And he'd known that the single life was the only life for him, on this earth. Get a little here, there. But keep it clean and free and independent. That was the only way.

DARKNESS WAS enveloping the street as well as the park when Scanlon finished scouring the cooled grill and left the restaurant. He paused to make certain that the night lock had caught, although he now had in a hip pocket inside a thick wallet the currency received from the past week. A thief wouldn't get much in there now.

On every Thursday night, he took the money home and then banked it on the next day. He liked to count the money exactly and make up the deposit slip at home early Friday morning before coming to work. He could properly concentrate, in that fashion, and do his other financial figuring too, such as adding up the interest on the insurance money, trying to decide whether to leave it there or put it elsewhere to make a higher percentage on the return.

He was close to having paid off the mortgage on the house, which was up a couple of blocks from the north edge of the park, on Valley Street. That was a good feeling, because the equity, plus Lila's insurance and the interest it was earning, assured him of his future. The business was healthy. Some day he could turn that over too.

Then, he would never be required to depend on anyone or anything, other than himself. They would never stick him into one of those old people's institutions where the rules of the home were laws of your life. Not Vic Scanlon.

He walked to the intersection and waited for the traffic lights to change. He was now wearing a lightweight gray sweatshirt over his T-shirt, against the slight coolness of early evening. Over his thinning hair he wore a knit cap pulled down to a point just above his thick eyebrows. He had begun wearing either his chef's hat or this cap ever since he started going bald.

Cars raced by, tires whirring against macadam. In the tradition of California, few horns sounded. Across the street, in the playground section of the park, children were defying darkness by continuing their play on swings. Their voices came through the

traffic sounds like distant echoes of elves and gnomes of another world.

The lighting in the display windows of the shops on this side of the street was turned on. Stars were shining in the new night sky. People, many Mexican, hurried along the sidewalk. Some, seeing the imposing figure of Scanlon for the first time, failed to hide a look of apprehension, if not honest fear.

When the green light flared, Scanlon crossed the street with one hand inside a pocket gripping a switch-blade knife. Mugging and purse snatching had increased in Devil's Park lately, caused, Scanlon was certain, by the movement of so many Mexicans to this section of the city. But he did not fear an assault on himself. He was ready, if it came.

As he had accumulated material security, Scanlon had become increasingly conservative. But he occasionally was more than willing to tempt fortune, so long as the situation remained on terms that he had defined. With his size and muscle and speed and experience, he was agreeable to taking on the dangers of walking through Devil's Park with a wallet full of money. The chance was a calculated one, and he had no doubts of the outcome, should anyone be stupid enough to try to get that money from him.

Wind blew gently through the park, moving the leaves of the elms and oaks and palms. He left the odor of exhaust fumes to detect instead the perfume of a large bank of yellow roses. He strode ahead on the stone path which ran in curves through the interior of this recreational offering. A low, early moon was showing through foliage now. But the light between park lamps, spaced well apart from each other, was so dim that only Scanlon's familiarity with the park made it possible for him to move with speed.

Owning no automobile out of preference, he always walked. And the only change in pattern was his selection of route. He could either follow this path all the way to Church Street, on the north edge of the park, then return two blocks west to his own street.

Or he could turn right on an alternate path midway through, follow that for a distance, then turn left again on another path, to come out of the park on the dead end of Valley Street. Doing that, he was required to walk through the back yard of what had once been the Noah place, an old but sturdy two-story frame house.

The Noahs had sold out in fear that Mexicans would sweep straight across the park and start buying on Valley Street itself, killing property values. The house was now up for sale.

Despite an underlying fear that he would not quite admit, Vic Scanlon continued to convince himself that no Mexican assault on his street would ever be committed, no threat would be made on the equity value of his home.

He became aware that someone was moving off to his right in the darkness, perhaps twenty yards away through the trees. He stopped and listened, hearing footsteps. The sprinkler system had broken down over there, he knew. The grass had become dry. And that was what someone was crossing now, that area of sun-bleached grass.

He was in near darkness himself, between the globular lamps on iron poles. Just the stars and the light of the early moon illuminated him faintly. He looked past the shadowy forms of trees, but he couldn't see who was there. As though realizing that Scanlon was listening, the second person stopped too.

Scanlon's fingers tightened around the handle of his knife. He broke into a run toward that dry-grass area. In his usual manner, Scanlon was direct. If someone meant to rob him, he would meet him head-on. If somebody was simply walking through with no intention of committing robbery, he would find that out.

When he reached the dry grass, he realized that whoever had been there was now running from him, north, through the central area of the park.

Scanlon felt the beginning warmth of anger. If someone was running away from him, he was guilty of something, wasn't he?

He listened carefully, checking the direction of the runner. He was heading straight north; that meant that he would reach the path angling east from the one Scanlon had been using. He was moving in almost total darkness, without benefit of a guiding path, and so he was not traveling fast.

Scanlon returned to the path he had been using and charged along it, a great, swift animal who had scented prey. His thick, muscular legs worked piston-like. He didn't stop until he'd reached the point where his path bisected another. He turned onto the new path, then stopped suddenly and kneeled behind the bushes, looking at the area ahead which was illuminated brightly by one of the park lamps. He had passed the other man, and now he heard him crashing clumsily through bushes.

The figure came into view, out of the trees, into the lamplight, and turned directly toward Scanlon, chest heaving, eyes large and frightened-looking. Scanlon stared with surprise at Constanza's husband, Jorge Gomez.

As the frail-looking young man stood riveted there, trying to find Scanlon's sound, Scanlon rose and stretched his body to its tallest.

He glared at the youth with vicous eyes. Gomez's mouth gaped. He paled.

"What are you doing, grape-picker?" Scanlon roared.

"Mr. Scanlon! I—"

"Figuring to rob me, weren't you?"

"No!"

"That was it, wasn't it?"

"No! When Constanza left the restaurant, I was waiting for her with the car. She said you didn't like me, that you wanted to beat me up! When she drove away to shop for groceries, I went to the park to sit and think about it. When I saw you coming through, I meant to avoid you because I don't want trouble. But you came after me. And I ran. Why would I want to rob you?"

"Money!" Scanlon growled. He lunged for him, and the youth ran again, disappearing into the darkness.

The heat of Scanlon's anger increased. Constanza knew that he carried the week's take home on Friday night. An hour ago she'd admitted that they needed all the money they could get. Fury pumped. He heard the youth stumbling desperately through the park to the north.

Scanlon went after him.

He thought that he would catch him near the north edge. But Gomez reached the back yard of the empty Noah house, fifty feet ahead. Scanlon saw him fly across

that yard, then disappear around a corner. There was a street light near the far side of the house, where Scanlon's own street ended.

Scanlon plunged across the yard, incensed now with the nearness of the scared and inept hunter who'd tried for him. He ran with head thrust forward, the thick cords of neck straining, blood reddening face and eyes. Was the kid armed with a gun? He must be, to have considered robbery in the first place. Had he intended to tie a handkerchief over his face and step out of the trees and use the gun to get Scanlon to hand over the money?

Scanlon wasn't afraid of that either; he knew the kid didn't have enough guts to use a gun on him. He was a coward. A failure already.

Scanlon had never, in the small town where he was raised, known any sort of prejudice. This was because that community was a melting pot of bloods; there was no minority to single out. His own blood was a mixture of several.

But since he had come to San Guido, he had learned how to

hate the color of a man's skin, the texture of his hair, the darkness of his eye. He hated because he believed those of a specific foreign origin to be a threat to his economic security, unless properly controlled. It did not matter to Scanlon that he derived a large percentage of his profits from such a group. It only mattered that they were capable of threatening his future. And one of them had planned to rob him and then had run like a frightened fawn when he'd been discovered.

SCANLON ROUNDED the corner of the house and looked along the street. Beyond the Noah house were others like it, standing behind neat and well-tended lawns, unpretentious-looking—comfortable middle-class homes, one after another. There was no Jorge Gomez in view. The house next door was protected by a high fence; Gomez could not have gone over it. He hadn't had time to disappear further along the street.

Scanlon looked at the old-fashioned front porch of the Noah house. There was a screen door in front of the entry door, and it was not quite shut. He remembered passing this morning. He was certain that it had been closed then. Had the realty people been around to show the house to a prospective buyer? Or . . .

He loped up the steps and threw the screen door open with such force that it cracked against the siding. He grasped the handle and pressed a thumb against the release. The door was locked. He fitted an ear against the wood and stopped breathing.

He heard someone running up the stairway.

He hurried to the car port in the back and crossed oil-stained concrete to the back door which had an upper section of small glass panes, behind which hung a yellow curtain left by Mrs. Noah. He tried to turn the brass knob, but this door was also locked.

He was right, Scanlon decided in his fury: the realty people had stopped and left the door open in front. Jorge Gomez had seen it ajar and gone through and locked it behind him.

Scanlon drove a giant fist through a pane. Glass clattered against kitchen linoleum inside. He did not even notice that a knuckle was bleeding now, and reached through the pane to push off the lock. He went in, fast.

Shades were drawn so that even the light from the street light in front did not penetrate. But Scanlon had been in here many times, when the Noahs had lived here. He knew every room and hallway in the house.

He crossed the kitchen, empty of furniture, into an equally empty dining room. He listened and heard nothing. He proceeded to the

living room. The stairway which Gomez had used ran up from the hallways beyond; the front door was there as well. Scanlon stopped in that hall and knew that Gomez could not possibly get past him now.

The youth was trapped, upstairs, unless he tried to break a leg by jumping from one of the second-floor windows.

Scanlon walked to the foot of the stairway, and felt his foot brush something as he did so. He bent and put his hand against a telephone resting on the floor. Disconnected, he knew. There would be no electricity either. But he could find him in the dark easily enough.

"Picker?" he called, staring into the darkness of the stairway.

He listened. There was no sound.

"Better hear me, picker," he said. "I'm coming for you."

He waited. When there was no response, he removed the knife from his pocket and snapped the blade out.

"Hear that, picker? Switch blade. I'm going to cut me up some Mexican."

Then he went up the stairway, shoes driving down heavily against the uncarpeted wood. He wanted the Mex to hear him coming up. "Going to rob me, weren't you, Gomez?"

"No!"

He grinned and decided that the kid was in the first bedroom off the top of the stairs. If there was a lock there, he would simply shoulder the door down.

Upstairs, he went down the upper hallway, his steps making walls rattle. He stopped in front of the first door, which was half-closed. He kicked it open. Unable to see, he got a packet of matches from his pocket and lit one. He crossed the floor; the flame wavered and whent out.

Scanlon lit another and checked the closet.

He returned to the hallway and searched two more bedrooms, closets, as well as the bathroom. He realized, with a return of fury, that Jorge Gomez had waited at the far end of the hall, waited until Scanlon had gone by him, then returned down the stairs. He might be a full block away by now . . .

Scanlon heard the sound of the telephone being dialed. Once. Meaning zero. Scanlon grinned again, hearing the hoarse whisper: "Help, please! Send police! One hundred Valley Street!"

Scanlon pulled off his shoes, thinking that Gomez had gotten a law degree by a miracle. Now he was trying to get help through a dead phone. Scanlon ran silently along the hallway and then down the steps, hearing the youth say:

"I am Jorge Gomez—"

Scanlon struck the phone out of

his hand. The terrified youth half screamed.

"Phone's dead, picker," Scanlon said. "So are you, just about!"

"Please, *señor!*"

Scanlon held his open-blade knife tightly, feeling every hate, every frustration, every disappointment he'd ever known, running through his hot blood now —hatred for all that had ever hurt him, hatred for every fear of anything, now or in the future. His eyes stung as he used his bulk to back the boy toward a corner.

"Going to kill you, Gomez," he grunted.

"I have done you no harm! I mean you no harm!"

"Been wanting me a Mex for a long time. I got me one now. I'll tell them you were after my money, because that's the truth. Had to use the knife on you. I'll put the money on you, boy. That'll be all of it. You want to say some Hail Marys?"

"Please!"

He heard the youth bump jarringly into the wall. Then he thrust the knife, underhanded, into where he expected the youth's belly would be. He found the target. The boy made some noises, but he kept using the knife until it was silent in that house.

He was still holding his shoes in his left hand, the knife in the other, feeling a great surge of elation, when warm blood soaked through one of his socks. He backed a couple of steps and put the shoes on. Now, he would walk down the street to his house and phone the police and tell them the boy had followed him into the house and he'd had to use the knife to protect himself and his money.

Then a powerful spotlight flashed across the front windows of the house. Scanlon frowned. He heard running toward the front door. Steps clattered on the porch. Then the door flew open with a tearing crunch as the lock was torn away. Two white-helmeted policemen came in holding pistols and flashlights.

Scanlon blinked bewilderedly.

"Drop the knife!"

He had felt wild fury, and then deep hatred, and finally the elation of killing the Mex. Now, he was simply confused.

"Drop the knife and turn around to the wall! Put your hands against the wallpaper. Hurry up!"

He let go of the knife and turned and put his palms against the paper.

"He was trying to rob me," he said protestingly. "I had to use the knife on him."

"What's your name?" He was frisked swiftly by one as the other bent to examine the dead youth.

"Vic Scanlon. I got the restaurant at Twenty-first and Elm. His wife works for me. She knows I carry money home on Friday

nights! So he was following me through the park, and then he came for me. I got away and came out here. I saw the front door was open, and I ran inside, to get away from him. But he broke in the back way and followed me."

"Check the back door, Joe."

"He took the money from me, and then—" Scanlon suddenly realized that he had failed to put the money into the boy's pocket. But he told himself that it wouldn't matter anyway. Gomez was nothing but a Mexican.

"Turn around," the patrolman ordered.

Scanlon did.

"He took money from you? There's only a couple of bucks in his wallet, nothing in his pockets."

"I didn't mean that. I mean that I knew he was going to try to get it from me. I thought he had a gun."

"He didn't."

The second patrolman returned and said, "A pane's knocked out of the back door—door's open."

"That's right!" Scanlon said. "He broke in the back, like I said." He'd left fingerprints on the knob, he knew, but why would they check that when only a Mex was involved?

"Why did he break in?"

"What do you mean? He was after me."

"I mean, when he's got keys for both doors."

"What are you talking about!"

"He signed the papers for this place three days ago. Real estate place told us so we'd know somebody had a right to come and go, here. Jorge Gomez. You killed him, Scanlon. Now why?"

"He was trying to rob me!"

One of the patrolmen turned a switch. The hallway was flooded with light from a ceiling bulb. Scanlon looked up at it with surprise. Then he looked at the telephone on the floor, off the hook. He felt like flowing out of him, leaving him empty, useless, without hope.

The first patrolman nodded. "Phone works too." He picked it up and said, "Still there?" He nodded again. "Good, and thanks. We'll be in touch." He hung up and turned back to Scanlon. "Operator heard it all, Scanlon. You just plain killed him."

Scanlon realized that he was being handcuffed. He couldn't believe it. Thirty minutes ago he'd owned total freedom. But right now . . .

"He was a *Mexican,*" he protested weakly.

"That's what you said you wanted, didn't you? Well, you got one. Let's go."

His face looking child-like in shock, Scanlon walked dumbly out with them.

3 BACK COPIES FOR ONLY $1

You May Have Missed
These Three MIKE SHAYNE Adventures

If you've just discovered MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE you may not have read any of the previously published issues. And if you are a real dyed-in-the-wool Shayne fan—and who isn't?—you'll want to read them. We have a very limited supply left of some of these back copies and they are yours—by filling out the conveniently printed coupon. Each issue also contains—besides a new Mike Shayne adventure—short stories, novelets and short novels by prominent writers in the mystery, crime and detective story field.

No. 1 . . . A RUN OF LUCK by Brett Halliday (July 1966)
It was a mad, deadly game they played, the tinhorn gambler and his beautiful doxie. When Mike Shayne took a hand, the stakes were steep indeed. The cheapest ante was—Murder!

No. 2 . . . THE MAN WHO FORGOT by Brett Halliday (August 1966)
Somewhere, hidden and deadly, a man with vengeance in his soul and murder on his mind had marked four men for death. But Shayne worked fast—before Murder got there first!

No. 3 . . . KICK OF DEATH by Brett Halliday (September 1966)
It was a deadly masquerade they played, the kid who wanted kicks and the ex-con who was his double. Mike Shayne had to crack the terrible riddle of the dead school boy.

RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
56 WEST 45th St., N. Y., N. Y. 10036

Please send me the three back copies of MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE.
I enclose $1.00 in full payment. Remit by check, money order, or cash.

NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY, STATE, ZIP .....

Please print **April—1969**

MURDER IN THE NIGHT

by DAN ROSS

Wisely, well had he covered his tracks to Murder. But Wong knew hidden trails too well . . .

THE SCREAMING wail of a siren roused Bombay art dealer Mei Wong from a deep sleep. For a moment the portly old Chinese stared up into the darkness to collect his thoughts. At first he tried to connect the harsh sound with his native Indian city and then he came more awake and recalled that he was still in the United States.

His leisurely visit to America had taken him to San Francisco and the stately white mansion on a hill overlooking the famous bay. He was the guest of millionaire Mark Dann, whose hobby of collecting Oriental treasures had made him a long-time client of Mr. Wong.

As the sound of hurried footsteps on the stairs and excited voices followed the siren's screaming note, Mr. Wong became conscious that some crisis had come to the great house.

Extending a pudgy hand to the bedside table, he switched on the light and hastily donned a white silk kimono with a huge black dragon painted across its back. At almost the same instant there was an urgent knocking on the door of his room and the voice of his friend and fellow house guest, San Francisco art dealer Charles Duffy, called out in agitated tone: "Mr. Wong, Mr. Wong! Are you awake?"

Mei Wong padded across on

Featuring

MR. MEI WONG

the thick carpet and opened the door.

"Yes," he said. "What has gone wrong?"

The thin, bald Duffy showed shock. "Dreadful business! Mark Dann was attacked in his upstairs study! They've just taken him away in an ambulance."

The white-robed Mei Wong frowned. "I heard it. Are the police here as well?"

Duffy nodded. "Yes. The motive for the attack was robbery. Dann had a large amount of cash in a wall safe in his study. The safe was equipped with a burglar alarm that alerted the police."

"Did they apprehend the criminal?" Mr. Wong asked.

"By the time the arrived here whoever it was had made an escape with the money," Duffy said with strain showing on his lined face. "A rear door was open and it looks as though the thief made his entrance and getaway through it."

"How badly was our host injured?" the old Chinese enquired with a grave expression.

Duffy sighed. "I only caught a glimpse of him, but his brother said his head was really bashed in. Someone came up on him from behind and used a heavy brass candlestick as a weapon."

"The police are still here?" Mr. Wong said, his broad face inscrutable.

"Yes. They want to speak with all of us." The thin art dealer's voice took on a note of apology. "I hope you won't mind going upstairs."

"Not at all," Mei Wong said. "I'm anxious to help in any way I can."

The upstairs study had become a scene of activity in the after-midnight hour. As Charles Duffy entered with the white-robed Mei Wong at his side, the several servants employed in the mansion were being dismissed after having given evidence.

They were on their way downstairs.

A stocky gray-haired man with an air of authority came across to greet Mei Wong and Duffy.

"I'm Captain Donnely of the San Francisco police department," he said. "I take it you are the house guests, Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wong."

Chairs had been set out in a semi-circle before the room's desk and Donnely pointed to the vacant ones. "Won't you please sit down and make yourself comfortable? I have a number of questions to ask."

Mei Wong and Duffy did so. The old Chinese art dealer noted that the others sitting in the semi-circle comprised what might be called the family group. Mark Dann's younger brother, Gregory Dann, was seated next to him. Gregory Dann gave him a stiff nod of recognition. Mr. Wong

knew him as a fanatical rightist who devoted his full energies and time to a small weekly newspaper voicing opinions that made those of the John Birch Society seem mild.

Gregory Dann was surprisingly a small man, with a high-pitched voice and near-sighted eyes that peered out disapprovingly at a world he had rejected. Two years younger than his brother, he was in his early sixties.

On the other side of him was Mark Dann's estranged third wife, Kathy Grant. Kathy had been a famous screen star when Mark had married her. But that was ten years ago and her brunette beauty had faded, although she still had a kind of ravaged loveliness and a youthful, perfect figure.

There had been a bitter break between Mark Dann and his well-known wife. They had been living apart for more than three years. He had refused to give her more than a meagre support required by the law until she recently had been picked up by the plain clothes detective of a large San Francisco department store when she tried to leave the store wearing a stolen mink cape.

The publicity attending the case and the fact that Kathy had pleaded amnesia and illness had caused Mark Dann to take her back under his roof for a trial period. But there was still a gulf between husband and wife. Kathy now sat

primly in a crimson robe, staring straight ahead.

Beyond her was young Mark Dann, Jr., the thirty-year-old son of Mark's second marriage, a thin, pinched-faced young man with the long, sloppy hair of the beatnik scene. Beside him was Stella, his wife, a girl of only nineteen with a pert beauty and an abundance of golden hair that flowed about her shoulders.

Stella was wearing a scanty transparent robe of mini-skirt length which even caught the attention of the conservative Mr. Wong.

Studying the long, lovely legs revealed by the short item of dress he recalled that young Mark Dann was also in disgrace with his father for habituating San Francisco's beatnik joints and refusing to work. His father had been against

young Mark's marrying Stella, who had a police record for vagrancy and theft among other things—hardly the kind of daughter-in-law the famous millionaire could have been expected to approve of.

Mei Wong glanced about the study with its examples of the millionaire's oriental art collection. He was not surprised that the aging man had turned from his unhappy domestic situation to concentrate on assembling the porcelain, brass and jade treasures that filled the mahogany paneled room.

Captain Donnely took a stand by the desk facing them all and interrupted the ancient Chinese's reverie as he said, "You are all aware of the crime that took place a short time ago in this room. Mr. Dann was near death when he left here and we know a large sum of money was taken from his wall safe."

The San Francisco police captain moved across to the wall where the safe stood open.

"You will note it is of peculiar construction," Donnely continued. "Built to Mr. Dann's specifications." He closed the circular door of the wall safe and then touched a spot on a golden frame that surrounded it.

As Donnely did so an exquisite work of Chinese art about twenty inches square slid down into the frame, completely concealing the safe. It was now merely an interesting work of art on the wall.

Captain Donnely glanced at Mei Wong. "I believe you sold Mr. Dann this Mi Frei painting," he said, indicating the study of a mountain scene with heavy clouds obscuring some of the detail.

Mr. Wong nodded.

"That is true," he said. "When he told me how he planned to use it I also suggested the type of frame that should surround it. A gold one festooned with tiny lotus leaves."

The police captain said, "And it is one of the lotus leaves in this bottom left corner of the frame that operates the painting itself, sending it sliding up or down."

The captain moved back to face them all again. "We have not had too much time to investigate. But we believe this to have been an inside job. Although the rear door was found open there are no signs of footprints in the soft ground left after tonight's rain."

Donnely paused significantly. "The servants all seem to have good alibis, so that leaves me with you people."

The diminutive Gregory Dann protested in his shrill voice, "Are you suggesting that one of us might have killed my brother?"

The captain shrugged. "I'm saying that it is likely. All of you had easy access to this room. And many of you may have had motives for the attack and theft."

Kathy Grant regarded the police officer haughtily. "It seems to me

you should be concentrating on finding the real thief rather than harassing my husband's family and friends."

"That's right," young Mark sneered. "But what can you expect in a police state!"

The remark brought a cold smile from Captain Donnely. "I think I can offer you all some convincing proof for my suspicions."

Charles Duffy, the art dealer, spoke up. "I hardly see why Mr. Wong and I should be involved in this unpleasantness."

The captain turned to him.

"Because you were in the house," he said. "And it may be you unwittingly have some information that will help us."

Mr. Wong quietly addressed Donnelly. "In these cases fingerprints often provide the most important clue. I assume you have found some?"

Captain Donnely looked grim. "I'm afraid not, Mr. Wong. Whoever it was took the precaution of wearing gloves."

"Most unfortunate," Mei Wong sighed.

The phone rang and one of Donnely's assistants took it and then called him. The grim police officer took the call and frowned as he listened. When he put the phone down again he came forwardly solemnly.

"It's a murder case now," he said.

Charles Duffy gave Mr. Wong a distressed glance. Gregory Dann turned white and bowed his head. Mark Dann's son showed distress on his thin face and exchanged an uneasy glance with his lightly-clad wife.

Mr. Wong broke the silence by saying, "This is most distressing, Captain. Have you been thorough in your search for fingerprints?"

Captain Donnely gave the old Chinese the vague glance of reprimand he probably reserved for all nuisances.

"I appreciate your interest in the case, Mr. Wong," he said. "But there are other things as important as fingerprints. Motives, for instance!"

Gregory Dann looked up angrily. "Are you saying that any of us would have a reason for killing Mark?"

"I gather you would," Captain Donnely told him. "According to my information you and your brother had a violent quarrel this evening. He refused to offer you any additional funds for your publication. You told him you would have to suspend it if he didn't give additional help. And he replied it would be better if you weren't able to issue it any more."

The little man looked flustered and turned angrily on his late brother's wife. "You eavesdropped and told them!" he accused her.

Kathy Grant eyed him with disgust. "You're wrong. But I agree the paper should be suspended."

Captain Donnely now gave her a cold look. "You had your own motive for murdering your husband, Mrs. Dann. He was about to insist that you leave his house again."

"It wasn't discussed," she protested.

"I think it was," the captain said smoothly and Donnely moved on to stand in front of the young Mark Dann and his wife. "You and your father were on bad terms. Only yesterday you were ordered to make something of your life or be disinherited."

Mark Dawn, the younger, looked afraid. "Dad and I often quarreled."

"But never so bitterly," the captain said. And with a glance at Stella, he said, "And you are no stranger to violence or theft, young lady."

"Don't try to blame it on me!" she cried out in a harsh voice.

Captain Donnely stared at her in silence a moment and then moved over to a place where he could study them all once again. In a carefully controlled voice, he said, "I've only pointed out that you all had motives. And since it was an inside job, one of you must have murdered Mark Dann."

Mr. Wong stood up ponderously, a majestic figure in the silk robe with its black dragon covering his broad back.

"May I offer a suggestion?" he said.

Captain Donnely sighed impatiently. "Well?"

"In my native Bombay I have often assisted my good friend, Inspector Bannerjee, in similar cases," the stout old art dealer said in his quiet sing-song voice. "At the risk of repeating myself I would like to bring up the subject of fingerprints again."

"Why?" the captain questioned in annoyance. "There are no fingerprints on the candlestick used as the murder weapon or anywhere around the wall safe."

Mr. Wong studied the painting covering the wall safe with its golden frame decorated with tiny lotus leaves. He looked sad. "I have a feeling some fingerprints will turn up. It would only be proper procedure for us all to be fingerprinted."

The captain seemed about to break into an angry tirade but instead Donnely shrugged and turned to his assistant. "Since Mr. Wong insists, we'd better take all their fingerprints."

The assistant began the task with each of them moving up to the desk to have the operation completed. Mark Dann, junior, and his wife, Stella, went first. Then Kathy Grant advanced hesitantly to the desk and let the sergeant take her prints.

The next in line was the diminutive right-winger, Gregory Dann. He made his way to the desk defiantly. With a sneer for Mei

Wong he told the captain, "It is especially useless for you to take my prints in this instance. Earlier this evening while I was making myself coffee in my room I burned my fingers on the pot. To take care of the burns I covered them with a medical plastic so you will get no prints."

"Take them anyway," Captain Donnely ordered the sergeant.

It turned out that Gregory Dann had spoken the truth. Each of his finger tips had been effectively blurred by the soft plastic material he'd used for the burns.

Then, as the sergeant took an impression of the forefinger of Dann's right hand, he stopped and stared at the result. Captain Donnely glanced at the desk and he suddenly froze. He turned quickly and waved to Mr. Wong to join him.

Mr. Wong did and saw what caused the consternation. For clearly defined on the test surface was the reverse pattern of one of the tiny lotus leaves—in fact, the identical tiny lotus leaf that served as control button for the sliding painting that covered the wall safe. It was there without question to indict Gregory Dann and convict him of murder and theft.

The little man swayed slightly and in a hoarse voice said, "All right. I did it. He deserved it." Gregory broke down and sobbed.

Mr. Wong nodded with gratification and told a shocked Captain Donnely, "As I pointed out, in these cases fingerprints often have the greatest importance."

In the Next Issue:

THE MISSING GABRIEL HORN

A Thrilling New ED NOON Short Novelet

by MICHAEL AVALLONE

Long had I sought it, the horn whose music was the most incredible mixture of beauty and evil ever distilled by man. Now it was playing, soft, unbelievably lovely in the silent room. Was it playing a salute to my skill—or was it playing my funeral march? Don't miss this superb new story of love and sudden death. Reserve your advance copy now!

JACK "LEGS" DIAMOND: THE COBRA OF THE UNDERWORLD

THE INSIDE STORY of A Dapper Dandy of Death

by DAVID MAZROFF

LIKE MACHINE-GUN Jack McGurn, Al Capone's executioner, Jack "Legs" Diamond was a brutal and ruthless killer. Like McGurn, he was assassinated before he was thirty-five years old—a ripe old age at that, when you consider the fact that most of the hoods who lived by the gun died a lot earlier.

Legs Diamond lived his life not in days and nights but in events, occasions composed and accented by a succession of sharply etched and mordant episodes of violence, the kind which caught the great American upheaval of the roaring, bootlegging, speakeasy Twenties the way a bad case of delirium tremens catches an alcoholic.

He remains today an unwelcome memory, a dirty blot on an evil era, a cataclysmic beat in the deranged tempo of blondes, booze, and bullets which shook the na-

Women adored him . . . lawmen hated him . . . gangland feared him with an intensity matched only by its terror of Scarface and his minions of death. Legs Diamond, they called him, the dapper little demon who loved and tortured and killed—and mocked the very torpedoes who lusted for his life.

tion for the entire third decade of the century.

It was an era when the bright lights of Broadway, baleful in their eerie sparkle, shone over scenes of gunplay, over killers, dope peddlers, thieves, pimps, madams, and whores.

It was a time of prosperity, in reality a time of ordeal, presaging the garbage dumps of depression, of disorder, of naked futility and despondency mottled with the raw scars of poverty and want.

Legs Diamond lived in the first, died in the second, his body riddled with the slugs pumped there by a dozen hoods who had made as many attempts to kill him.

He was a liar and a cheat, a double-crosser of friend and foe alike, a man with no conscience, no heart, no mercy or compassion. He was hated and feared, yet he was able to attract the most beautiful chorus girls and showgirls on Broadway, romanced them, loved them, left them, and disillusioned them.

He was the typical movie gangster, possessed of a sinister kind of charm, regular features, thin dark hair and brown eyes, five feet ten inches in height and weighing no more than one hundred forty-five pounds with a gun in his hand.

He was a sharp dresser, quick with a buck. It was easy to understand how the cuties of Broadway were attracted to him. The gangsters of the day were a fad and no chorus babe was considered *soigne* without one.

Most of the top hoods, however, would have preferred to be seen with the devil than in the company of Legs Diamond. They disliked his swaggering ways and his disregard of the underworld codes. They also disliked his manner of killing.

Mortimer "Monkey" Schubert had been a Diamond henchman. Nothing big. He was a runner and a collector. He left Diamond and went over to Dutch Schultz and took a lot of business with him. Legs caught up with him on the morning of November 12, 1929, as he was walking on Lenox Avenue in Harlem. Eddie Diamond, who was driving the big black sedan, pulled up several feet in front of Schubert and Legs jumped out of the car and confronted his ex-ally.

"Well, Monkey, good to see you again. Get in the car. I want to talk to you." He took the little gangster's arm and pulled him toward the car.

Monkey held back, certain that Diamond wanted to kill him, and started talking a blue streak and a little hysterically.

"Legs, listen. You gotta listen to me. Dutch said you wouldn't care if I went with him. He said he asked you and you said it was okay. I was nothin' in your organization. Just a runner. Dutch

said he would pay me more money. He said you would want that for me. You would, wouldn't you?" He was taking huge gasping breaths, his lips twisting nervously and his legs trembling.

"Sure, Monkey," Legs said reassuringly. "Why not? You're a pal. And I'm not sore about the business you took with you and handed over to the Dutchman. I just want to talk things over with you. Now get in the car."

He pushed the little hood into the front seat of the sedan beside his brother Eddie, looked around briefly, and then slid into the back seat and unhitched the pistol in his holster.

Eddie drove to Long Island and then to a lonely spot in Long Beach and parked. All during the ride Monkey kept talking, trying to justify his actions, but Legs Diamond didn't answer.

When Monkey turned around at one time he saw the gun in Legs' hand and shuddered. The sweeping knowledge of an imminent and violent death poured a quick mask of terrible fear and dark sadness over Monkey's face. He knew it was useless and hopeless to plead for his life, that anything he might say would be futile, words carried away by the winds.

Yet he tried. He pleaded with his heart in his eyes and his soul in his voice, and Diamond was about to take both.

"Get out, Monkey," Legs ordered. "Get out, you stinking double-crossing rat. I know the Dutchman didn't say a damned thing to you. You took the whole deal to him yourself. If you wanted a little more money, why the hell didn't you ask me?"

"Legs, I should've. I know that. Give me a break now. I'll go back with you. I'll work for keep, for anything you wanna pay me. Don't kill me, Legs. Give me a break!"

"Sure, I'll give you a break!" He got out of the car and yanked Monkey from the front seat, spun him around and banged him over the head with the pistol.

Monkey let out a strangled cry and dropped to the ground. Legs bent down and ripped Monkey's shirt down the front. Monkey regained consciousness and began to beg for his life.

"Okay," Legs snarled. "You're gonna get a break. Take off your clothes. Strip, right down to the skin."

Monkey fumbled with his coat, his half-torn shirt, then his trousers and shorts. They were the last vast spending of his time on earth and he half-blubbered, the tears crawling out of his eyes. He turned to Eddie Diamond.

"Tell him to give me a break. He's your brother. Tell him to give me a break."

Eddie sneered back. "Sure, Monkey. Legs, give him a break," he said. "The little rat wants a

LEGS DIAMOND

break. Over his head, Legs?"

"Sure, Eddie." Legs Diamond raised his arm and brought the pistol down on Monkey's head.

Life turned to acid for Monkey then. He rolled around on the ground and made whimpering sounds.

Legs tortured him, burned him from his forehead to his navel, shot him in each cheek, shoulder, and arm, and then, for the *coup de grace,* shot him in the back of his skull. He then took a six-inch switchblade from his pocket, hacked off Monkey's right ear and wrapped it in a handkerchief.

"This is going to the Dutchman," he said to Eddie. "A little souvenir. If he doesn't get the message with this, we'll send him the next guy's arms and legs. Come on. Let's throw this bum in the car. I want to take him back to the Dutchman's territory."

THE NEXT AFTERNOON a street-cleaner noticed a nude figure in a brown coupe, the body covered with rags and an old blanket. He called the police, who raced to LaSalle Street in West Harlem. They found Monkey Schubert.

"That was a rotten way to die," one of the cops said. "This guy was tortured plenty before he was killed."

The other cop turned away from the sight of the corpse, bent his head and threw up.

That's the way Legs Diamond operated.

He wasn't born to deal in soul-naked savagery. On the contrary. he was born to devout Irish parents in Philadelphia in 1898. John and Anna Diamond wanted Legs, christened John Thomas, Jr., to study for the priesthood, as they wanted Eddie, who came two years later, to do the same. In 1910, when Legs was twelve and Eddie ten, Mrs. Diamond, a worn, fragile woman, died of tuberculosis.

John Sr., a minor politician and coffee roaster, could do very little with his sons. Eddie worshipped his older brother and would follow him into hell. Legs took him there several times.

"That lung disease is our curse,

Eddie," Legs said. "It killed Ma and it will kill us. We haven't got time to make with this priest business. We have to live a little before we go, get a lot of money, do things."

"Sure, Johnny. Whatever you say. What about school? We have to go to school."

"Okay, okay, but we don't have to eat and sleep there. So much time for school and so much time for what we want to do."

The Diamonds lived in the neighborhood of East Albert Street, a section similar to New York's lower East Side around Houston, Canal, Orchard, or Rivington Streets, the breeding ground for Bugsy Siegel, Meyer Lansky, the demons of Murder Inc., and dozens of other hoods and killers.

It was peopled by heterogeneous racial groups. The misfits formed into marauding mobs. Leg's gang was comprised of young Irish punks known as The Boiler Gang, from hanging around the boiler yard, which was situated in the district. They stole anything they could get their hands on. Trucks delivering packages were their special objectives. As soon as the driver left the truck to make a delivery, the gang would swoop down on it and make off with as many packages as they could carry.

Police officers called on the elder Diamond.

"Your boys are heading for the reform school, John," one of the cops said. "They are mixed up with that bunch of rowdies around the boiler yard, stealing, robbing, molesting the young girls. We want you to do something about them or we'll have to run them in."

The elder Diamond sighed. "Sure and I know the boys are going to hell and I don't know how to stop them. Their mother must be weeping in heaven for my failure with the lads. And what should I do? I'm not one to lay a hand on them."

It wouldn't have done any good. Legs had determined to be a thief and he took Eddie with him. In his five-foot ten-inch frame was one hundred and forty pounds of chaos and defiance of all law and order and a hot, convulsive savagery.

Yet, despite this, he had an ambition toward a legitimate profession—one profession. He wanted to become a dancer and induced an old song and dance man to teach him several routines. Lithe, quick, his dancing feet stood him in good stead when he fought other boys. He would move in with a fast series of punches and then dance out of danger as his opponent flailed the air.

It was then that he exhibited the first manifestations of the cruelty in his makeup, the hardness of heart. Even when the boy he was fighting hollered "quits"

Legs refused to let up but continued punching until his victim fell to the ground unconscious. Only then was he satisfied.

The cops were after him all the time but could get nothing on him, nothing that would stand up in court. Philadelphia finally got too hot for him and Eddie and the boys were sent away to an uncle in Brooklyn, a fateful move.

The uncle told them to go to work. "I've got many mouths to feed, boys, and though you are my own flesh and blood, my own sister's sons, God rest her soul, 'tis much too hard for me to support you. You're strong boys. Get yourselves jobs and earn your keep."

Jack Diamond decided to become a singing waiter, popular then in the saloons of the Bowery and the East Side of Manhattan. He made the rounds but was turned down in each instance. Someone told him to see Monk Eastman, gang boss of the East Side and a notorious figure in the underworld.

"A dancer? Singing waiter?" Eastman scoffed. "Say, kid, that ain't no job for a smart boy like you. You stick with me and you'll make more money in a week than you could in ten if you was a dancer."

"Sure, Mr. Eastman. That's what I want. Lots of money."

Monk turned Legs back to the thief he was, back to stealing packages from trucks, snatching packets of money and bonds from the hands of messengers and running like a scared rabbit until he lost himself in a crowd. It was his ability to run which earned him his nickname "Legs."

He was also earning a reputation as a thief and a fighter. At the time there were several gangs in the city whose chiefs were interested in adding the Diamond brothers to their rosters of young thieves and hoodlums.

Owney "The Killer" Madden bossed the Gophers, a wild bunch of some two hundred punks, none over twenty years old but wise in the ways of the street. Madden's territory ran from the south side of 42nd Street to the north side of Greenwich Village, and from Ninth Avenue to the Hudson River. He offered Legs and Eddie jobs.

Others who spoke to the brothers were the chiefs of the Hudson Dusters, the Car Barn Gang, and the Five Pointers.

Owney Madden met with Legs in the Winona Club. "You come with me, Legs, and you'll triple your money. I got a real organization. These other guys don't know what they're doing."

He was right. Madden set the pattern for the gangs that were to follow—the Bug and Meyer Mob, Lucky Luciano, Dutch Schultz, Vincent Coll, and Murder, Inc. He had hot cars ready

for use in getaways from robberies, arsenals, drops for merchandise, hideouts, lawyers, and bondsmen. He explained all this to Legs, who caught on fast.

"Okay, Mr. Madden. Eddie and me will join up with you."

Legs Diamond picked up all the information and knowledge he could from Madden. He learned the art of organization, who to fix, what cops were on the take, how much money to contribute to the campaigns of judges, councilmen, other politicians who could be of help in times of trouble. There was one thing Madden didn't teach him, and that was cruelty and savagery and a heedlessness which, if it wasn't daring, was sheer foolhardiness.

The association with Madden lasted for three years; then Legs went out on his own with a vengeance. The brothers started a hijack gang with no holds barred. They raided rival mobs, put the squeeze on fences, shook down madams and whores, pimps and hustlers. They stuck up crap games, poker games, saloons, nightclubs, anyone and everyone who carried money.

Legs was barely twenty years old at the time, still the same height and still slim at one hundred and forty pounds with a gun in his hand.

WORLD WAR ONE took Legs Diamond out of the rackets temporarily. He did something which has puzzled historians of the crime scenes. He enlisted. Judging him as only one can, an amoral and conscienceless criminal, it must be said that he enlisted only because he knew he would be drafted anyway. In no time at all he was in a detention cell at Camp Merritt, New Jersey.

He had gone AWOL to Sandy Hook, where he frequented the dance halls and saloons and made time with the babes he picked up. One of the girls he met in a dance hall was a sixteen-year-old beauty named Katherine Williams, who was vacationing in the area. He gave her a big rush but she wouldn't come across unless he married her.

On November 20, 1917, she became Mrs. John Thomas Diamond, Jr. Legs may have been in love with her because he showered her with gifts, took her to the finest restaurants, checked into the best hotels.

It couldn't last, however. MPs picked him up and threw him back into a detention cell. When he was released, he again went AWOL and joined his bride. He was picked up and again thrown into a detention cell.

The marriage ended unofficially when, on July 1, 1918, Legs Diamond was shoved aboard the SS *Toloa* for France. Paris intrigued him. The bright lights of the city were like a flame to a moth. He

went AWOL again, was picked up in a luxurious bawdy house in the Montmartre, yanked out of bed.

"Don't you guys have any feelings?" Legs protested. "Give me a break. Look at this gorgeous doll. I may never see her again."

"You bet your life, Diamond. Get your butt out of that bed and put on your clothes. You're going back to detention!"

Legs was sentenced to three months in the brig. On January 5, 1919, he was returned to the United States to stand trial on charges of escape from Camp Merritt, carrying concealed weapons, theft, and for assault and battery on a sergeant.

Katherine had the marriage annulled while he was in detention awaiting trial.

The military court convicted him and sentenced him to five years in Leavenworth. He was released after serving only part of his sentence and returned to New York to find that Prohibition was in effect, that liquor was illegal but that it was to be found in greater abundance than when the law did not restrict its sale or use.

"Everybody's in the racket, Legs," Eddie told him. "There's more money in making and selling the stuff than there is in every bank in New York."

"Who's in it? Which of the mobs?"

"Everybody. Madden, Dutch Schultz, Luciano, you name them."

"Schultz? Who's he? I don't remember him."

"He runs the Bronx and Harlem. Beer, whisky, gambling, just about everything." Eddie coughed harshly and Legs looked at him closely.

"You picked it up, huh," he said, and there was genuine concern in his voice. "You got it. Like Ma."

"No. I'm okay, Legs. Just a bad cold."

"Like hell, Eddie. I heard Ma cough like that too many times not to recognize it. You need some Denver climate."

"No, no, Legs. I want to be here with you. Together. You and me, like always."

"Okay, Eddie. For now. But if that cough doesn't get better you're going to Denver for the cure."

1921, when Legs returned to New York, was the birth of the dazzling panorama of the strange epoch in our history which, because of the events and the colorful figures, made the Decade of the Damned an unforgettable era for those who lived in it.

Prohibition, the nation's saddest error, created the speakeasies, and the speakeasies needed liquor and beer to stay in business. It was inevitable that the underworld would supply it.

Legs formed a mob comprised of Lucky Luciano, Dutch Schultz, a jewel burglar named Eugene

Moran and a few other assorted hoods, thieves, gunmen, and killers.

Schultz was apprehensive at first.

"What're you offering that I haven't got now?" he asked Diamond.

Legs shot him a long look. "Brains, Dutch. Don't get sore. I'm only giving you a few facts. You've got a good operation, but have you got protection? Can you operate without fear of getting knocked off, not only by the cops but by a lot of ambitious guys who are looking to cut into the rackets?"

"Ain't nobody bothered me yet," Schultz said. "I got some good guys with me."

"Sure you have. But they're gonna start bothering you. Hijacking your beer and liquor, heisting the bookie joints, knocking off your guys, one at a time, two at a time, until you get dizzy. With me, Lucky, and Moran as partners you got a lot of protection behind you. Nobody will have the guts to bother you."

Schultz thought about it a while, then agreed. "We take in more territory, is that right?"

"Right," Diamond replied. "All of Manhattan. The cream."

"What about Madden?"

"I'll handle Madden."

Lucky said, "I got a lot of connections with fences. One of them is Moe Ducore, who owns a drug

store on Seventh Avenue and forty-ninth Street. He'll handle anything we get. Especially white stuff."

"Heroin?" Schultz asked.

"Right. There's a fortune in it. Also hot stones. I got a few guys who work the night clubs, follow the dames home who wear a lot of jewelry, take them. Another thing you don't know, Dutch, is that I'm in with Joe The Boss Masseria. That's a lot of protection."

Schultz smiled. Masseria was the head of the New York Mafia at the time and a powerful man in the National Syndicate which even then was operating skillfully. Schultz was sold completely. And so was formed one of the most case-hardened gangs in New York's history of criminal syndicalism.

Legs Diamond moved fast. He threatened, slugged, killed, left bodies in the streets, in the Hudson and East Rivers, and his name became synonymous with death.

It was inevitable that the big boys of crime would take notice

of him. Arnold Rothstein, the money man back of all the top hoods, wanted a bodyguard because he carried large sums of money with him. He called Diamond and asked him to meet with him. When the conference was over, Legs became Rothstein's bodyguard.

ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN taught Legs Diamond the psychology of "The Edge"—taking advantage in every transaction.

Rothstein was not ruthless or cruel in the sense that characterized Diamond's personality but he was equally blind to any moral or ethical standard. He had a shrewd if perverted intellect and it was evident in all the many dealings he had with the underworld.

He was a loan shark, a dealer in narcotics, a fence who handled large sums in stolen securities and valuable gems worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. He was a fixer of horse races, boxing bouts, and was involved in the fix of the World Series between the Chicago White Sox and the Cincinnati Reds in 1919, which saw eight White Sox players banned for life from baseball.

Rothstein always denied this, but evidence pointed strongly to Abe Attell, Featherweight Champion of the World from 1908 to 1912, who was the front man for Rothstein for many years.

Legs Diamond knew he was in the presence of a master gambler, all-around underworld entrepreneur, and a man with ice water in his veins. He listened to everything Rothstein told him, and to a lot that Rothstein didn't want him to hear. This was Diamond's last enrollment in the school of crime, a graduate course in which he earned his master's degree.

Although Rothstein paid Diamond a thousand dollars a week to act as his bodyguard, Legs found time to engage in many enterprises on his own. As late as 1927, Diamond was in partnership with Lucky Luciano, and there is on file in New York newspapers a picture showing Legs, his brother Eddie, Fatty Walsh, Charlie Luciano, and an unidentified hood in a police showup.

Diamond was fired by Rothstein in 1926 because Legs stole a hundred thousand dollars from his boss. Rothstein had sent Legs to Europe to pick up a large amount of heroin and gave him the hundred thousand dollars to pay for it. Legs returned empty-handed.

"I got heisted in Marseilles," Legs told Rothstein. "Somebody must've tipped these guys I was carrying a roll. I took this cab, and when I got in, two guys got in with me, one on each side, put pistols in my ribs and told me to hand over the money." He spread his hands. "What could I do?"

Rothstein eyed him coldly, walked away from him to a win-

dow and stood there with his back toward Diamond. He said, "Legs, you are the damnedest liar I've ever known. You've got guts too to come back to me and tell me a lousy story like this. You were no more heisted than I was. The people I sent you to were on the lookout for you. They had one of their men in Marseilles to take you in hand.

"You've done a bad thing to me and to the people in Marseilles. You've left them holding the bag. Having that much stuff in their possession is dangerous for them. The Interpol could snatch it up and they'd be out a cool hundred grand." He turned around and faced Legs. "If those people were in town your life wouldn't be worth a nickel."

Rothstein's eyes narrowed. "As it is, right now it isn't worth a dime. With me. I don't like double-crossers. I don't like liars. And I don't like cheap gunmen. That's all you are, Legs. You beat me for a hundred grand. Spend it fast. Now get out. And don't ever come to this apartment again."

Rothstein spread the word about Diamond's double-cross and Legs became personna non grata with all the top underworld hoods. There were some, of course, who hated Rothstein and thought Legs had pulled off a cute trick.

Legs opened the Hotsy Totsy Club, which became a hangout for hoodlums, high-priced call girls, and a front for his many illegal activities. He remained cold and watchful, alert to passing cars with shades drawn or big black sedans that cruised slowly through the streets. He knew from the two years he had spent with Rothstein that the underworld czar was a man who hated to be beat and would avenge himself in the traditional manner.

Legs carried two guns, one in a shoulder holster and the other inside the waistband of his trousers. He met Rothstein in Lindy's restaurant one evening.

"I've been hearing some bad rumors, Mr. Rothstein," he said in a low voice. "I hear you've got some guys gunning for me. I want to give you some advice. If I get hit, you'll get hit too, only harder. Keep it in mind."

Rothstein's eyes were cold as he stared at Legs. "I don't like that kind of talk, Legs. My advice to you is not to repeat it. I don't get upset over rumors. People with small minds do. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'd like to finish my dinner."

In the fall of that year, 1924, Legs was walking down Fifth Avenue near 110th Street. The big black sedan he always looked for cruised up behind him as silently as a stalking panther, drew abreast, and one of the gunmen poked a shotgun through the open rear window and let go.

Legs was struck in the right side

of his head. He dropped to the sidewalk as the sedan sped away, got up a few moments later, stumbled to his car and drove to Mount Sinai Hospital. The doctors called the cops.

Legs had a minor police record at the time, having pulled a stretch in the state reformatory when he was sixteen years old, shortly after coming to New York. The cops didn't know him from Adam's house cat.

"Who shot you?" one of the cops asked.

"I don't know. I was walking down the street and all of a sudden I heard some shots and the next thing I knew I was on the ground. That's all I know."

The other cop turned to the attending physician. "We want to take this guy to the station. Can he be moved?"

"I think so. He got a small dose of birdshot. Superficially. He'll have a headache tomorrow. He's okay now. You may take him."

The cops got nowhere. Legs Diamond held to the underworld code.

It took him several days to find out who had turned the shotgun on him. He caught up with the hood a week later in a restaurant on Eighth Avenue, marched him out into the street, down 46th Street to Tenth Avenue, where the lights were dim.

"You bastard," he cursed. "Who paid you to get me?"

"It wasn't me, Legs. Honest. I had nothing to do with it. I'll help you find the guy. Give me a break."

It was the same song that was to be sung by a score of hoods who followed him, but it fell on deaf ears. Legs was fury-driven, blind with rage over the attack that had been made on him. Pity, compassion, pleas for mercy were soundless murmurings in a soundless world.

"Put your hands behind your back, you bastard!"

"Legs, please. Give me a break."

"Put your hands behind your back," Legs screamed the command.

The hood, shaking with fear, put his hands behind his back, and as he did so Legs slugged him across the face with the barrel of the pistol and broke his nose. Blood gushed out through both nostrils and flowed in two lead-pencil streams down the hood's chin. He raised both his hands to his face and as he did so Legs shot him in the belly three times.

The wounded man clutched his stomach and yelled for help and the mercy of God, and Legs shot him twice in the chest. He was dead before he hit the ground.

The next afternoon Legs ran into Rothstein on Broadway and 50th Street. "You had a bad idea, Mr. Rothstein. You sent those guys after me. You've got your

EDDIE DIAMOND

answer. Or only part of it. I'll give you the rest in a few days."

"Legs, you're a young man," Rothstein replied. "I don't know why you're so intent on chasing death."

"I'll never catch him, Mr. Rothstein. But he'll catch a lot of people on your payroll. Keep that in mind."

Rothstein's answer was a cold stare.

When Jack got home early the next morning his wife of three years—he had married Alice Kenny Schieffer, a blond, attractive young woman, in 1921—told him a man had climbed into the room when she was asleep, awakened her, and told her to "tell your husband to lay off Mr. R or you're going to be a widow. Understand?"

"What did this guy look like?"

"I couldn't see very well. The room was dark and he held a flashlight in my face. When he went back out through the window I saw that he was kind of small, about five feet five or six, and about one hundred and twenty five pounds."

"Don't worry about him. He'll never bother you again."

"Honey, I'm not worried about me. It's you. Don't you see? He meant you would be killed."

"Nuts, Alice. Don't worry about it. Go back to sleep."

"Are you coming to bed, Honey?"

"Sure. Soon as I have a drink."

"Hurry, Honey. I miss you so much."

"Sure, sure, Alice. Right away."

ALICE KENNY SCHIEFFER had been a dancing teacher in a studio in Manhattan where she met Legs. He had swept her off her feet shortly after coming out of Leavenworth and they were married a few weeks later.

She didn't know that her husband was a hoodlum, gangster, and killer. All she knew of him was that he was charming, a great dancer, generous, and kind. She was sure they would have a happy life together, live in a lovely cottage and raise a large family.

They did move into a lovely cottage in Cliffside, New Jersey, but instead of filling the house with children Legs filled it with his underworld pals. They drank all night, sang raucous songs, argued with their girl friends who, addled by drink, screamed like Indians on a war-party.

The neighbors complained constantly to the police. They usually came in two squad cars, broke up the party and sent everyone home. The complaints became too frequent and the cops got tired of it and told Legs to "move the hell out of this neighborhood or you'll spend a lot of time in the tank. You and your friends!"

He moved. To an old farmhouse at Acra, in the Catskills. It was to prove an important, and fateful, move. The area, over 600 miles, with some 30,000 natives, and more than a million visitors during the summer and fall seasons, held tremendous possibilities.

Legs Diamond saw that the potential profits in supplying liquor to the thirsty vacationers would be incalculable. Millions. A group of independents, amateurs, supplied the illegal wares on a hit and run basis. Moving them out would be duck soup. He told Dutch Schultz and Lucky Luciano what he had found.

"Sounds great, Legs," Dutch said. "How do I fit into this?"

"I want all the liquor I'll need from you."

At what price?"

"Your cost. Your boys haul it to Acra. You'll get 25 percent of the net."

"What net? What price are *you* going to get?"

"I'll figure that out later. After I see how much the traffic will bear."

"And where do I fit into this?" Luciano asked.

"The girls. You supply the girls. We'll open up a couple of roadhouses and stock them with the cream of the broads. Liquor and girls. The two greatest products in the world."

"We've got some unfinished business here, Legs," Schultz said. "There's a new mob operating in town headed by two tough Yiddishers, Louis 'Lepke' Buchalter and Jake 'Gurrah' Shapiro. Ever hear of them?"

"No. Who the hell are those jokers?"

"They're making themselves known," Luciano said. "Murder, Incorporated. They take on any kind of contract. They've got a strong organization. Bugsy Siegel, Abe Reles, Happy Maione, Frank Abbandando, Pittsburgh Phil Strauss, and a lot of others. What do you think of that?"

"I don't know what I think of it. What's their big racket?"

"The garment industry," Schultz said. "They own it. Work both ends to the middle. With the bosses against the unions and with

the unions against the bosses. Sometimes at the same time."

"What about Jake Orgen?" Legs asked. "I thought he had a piece of the garment business action."

"He has," Luciano replied. "But from what I hear he's on borrowed time. Lepke and Gurrah themselves are looking for him."

"The bastards!" Diamond swore. "Little Augie is a friend of mine. I'll go see him."

"Stay out of it, Legs," Schultz warned. "These guys ain't fooling."

"Neither am I."

"How's your brother Eddie?" Luciano asked. "Still in Denver?"

"Yeah. He's getting better. Why?"

"Send word to him to be careful. I got the word that Arnold Rothstein is sending some guys out there to take him. He figures that's gonna hurt you a lot worse than if he put you on the spot."

Diamond's face went white with anger. "I'm going to put a slug right through Rothstein's belly one of these days. I'll send word to Eddie. Right now I'm going to see Little Augie. I'll get in touch with you two next week and we'll go over my deal."

Diamond got in touch with Little Augie and told him what he had learned.

"What's the deal?" he asked. "Why do these guys want to take you?"

"I'm protecting the bosses in this painters' strike. They gave me fifty G's to end the strike. I took the money to Lepke and Gurrah and offered to split it but they told me to take the dough back because they're working with the union. That's all there is to it."

"Then to hell with them. They can't tell you how to run your business. You don't tell *them.*"

Diamond was wrong. So was Little Augie. Diamond just didn't know the characters of Buchalter and Shapiro, who were deadly as striking cobras. Little Augie was wrong because he didn't tell Diamond the full story.

Orgen had agreed several months earlier to work with Buchalter and Shapiro in settling any strikes. They had cut him in on a lot of business. They now expected him to cooperate on the painters strike. His refusal amounted to a double-cross.

On this October afternoon in 1927, Little Augie and Legs Diamond were walking down Delancey Street on New York's Lower East Side. It is a street forever crowded with masses of humanity, push carts laden with goods of every description peddled by hawkers shouting at the top of their voices to come buy their wares at below cost prices.

It is the melting pot of a great city, the world of the poor Jews, Italians, Irish, Slavs, Poles, and every other ethnic group imaginable. It has given birth to gangsters

and killers, famous show people, lawyers, judges, politicians, men and women who pulled themselves up out of the muck and mire of poverty and disadvantage into the world of wealth and success.

It also gave life to a dozen or more men who walked the last mile through the green door of Sing Sing Prison and died in the electric chair. This was Little Augie's world, his place of birth, and now his place of death.

The black sedan cruised slowly behind Little Augie and Legs Diamond, and suddenly pulled a little ahead and stopped. Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro, gun in hand, jumped out of the car and faced the two men, his face dark with anger, his eyes hot with malice.

"Gurrah the way, Diamond!" Shapiro yelled and leveled the gun at Little Augie's chest.

"Don't, Jake!" Orgen yelled. "Don't kill me. Don't!"

"Rat! Snake!" Shapiro yelled and fired.

The first gunshot threw the street into a panic. Men dropped to the sidewalk, women screamed and huddled their children. A peddler turned over his pushcart and dove beneath it. Orgen stumbled backwards as the first shot struck him. Three more shots crashed into Orgen's chest, threw him against a building, and then he collapsed and died. Diamond reached for his gun but he was too slow.

"You dumb bastard!" Shapiro yelled and fired. The slug tore into Diamond's right shoulder and his gun clattered to the ground. "Next time I'll kill you, Diamond so watch your step!"

He stared at Little Augie's form for long seconds, while the crowd around him stood terrified and frozen with fear, and then he strode to where Orgen lay already dead, pointed the pistol at his head and fired. Several women screamed again. Two fainted.

An old Jew, skull capped, carrying a Torah, murmured the Kodash, prayer for the dead, and then Shapiro turned and walked to the car, got in, and Lepke Buchalter drove away.

This was Murder, Inc. Louis "Lepke" Buchalter and Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro. Two men who brought into terrifying focus the nightmare reality of violence and death.

Diamond learned a lesson at that moment. He suddenly knew that the unspeakably evil quality of his own violence had suddenly been taunted and challenged by a cold evil he never had known. He knew that if he hoped to stay alive in the world he had chosen to live that he had to match it, grain for grain, or better it. He put his hand to his bleeding arm and winced with pain.

At that moment he jerked the devil out of hell and made him an accomplice.

In the police station he said he didn't know who had killed Orgen and shot him. "The bullets came so fast the only thing I could do was duck. If I knew who it was I would tell you."

The cops knew he was lying but they couldn't prove it and turned him loose, but not before a detective had his say.

"Diamond, you're not fooling anybody. We know all about you. You worked for Madden, and before him, Monk Eastman. We know you were Arnold Rothstein's bodyguard, and why he fired you. We're going to watch you very closely because you're a piece of scum.

"I hope that someday you're foolish enough to pull a gun on me because I'd like nothing better than to take you right out of the picture.

"Look at me, punk. My name's Johnny Broderick. Remember it! Now get the hell outta here because you stink!"

AL CAPONE

LEGS DIAMOND called Schultz and Luciano and met them in a 52nd Street speakeasy.

"I want that bum Shapiro," he said. "I need your help to set him up."

Schultz let out a short laugh. "You're nuts, Legs. Take my advice and leave that guy alone. You got away lucky. Let it be that way. If you're smart, you'll get in touch with Shapiro and make your peace with him. You'll live a lot longer that way."

"He's right, Legs," Luciano agreed. "Don't push your luck. Forget the incident. Let's get down to business. When do we move into Acra?"

"Pretty soon. I'll set things up and get in touch with you as soon as I do."

"Okay," Schultz said. "That's the smart thing. Call me when you're ready. I've got all the goods you'll need."

"So have I," Luciano said. "Let's start operating."

Diamond's reaction to Jake Shapiro's mad, wolf-like assault, carried out with disdain and utter disregard for witnesses who might identify him, was to take a page out of the book and write it into his own, compounding the Shapiro style by acts of mayhem which added to the savagery of his killings.

He threw all caution to the winds and attacked with an unreasoning and barbaric ferocity, in

broad daylight on the street, in crowded restaurants, speakeasies, or wherever else he could find his victims, and he sought them relentlessly.

Arnold Rothstein foolishly sent three men to Denver to kill Eddie Diamond, feeling that Eddie's murder would hurt Legs a lot more than his own death. Eugene (Red) Moran, Frank (Blubber) Devlin, and James (Jimmy The Knife) Batto were the three hoods who were talked into taking the contract.

Strangely enough, and for no known reason other than perhaps that he wanted Rothstein's good will, Dutch Schultz went along with the deal and promised the three hoods protection from Diamond.

They botched the job. Eddie ran into a fusillade of shots on a Denver side street but was only wounded.

Legs learned of the plot and the men who were in on it. He marked their names down in his little black book for due attention. It took him some time to erase the names in his book but he was patient.

On November 6, 1928, Arnold Rothstein received a call in Lindy's restaurant to go to room 328 in the Park Central Hotel to see Big George McManus. He was shot in the guts, staggered out of the room, walked to the street, was rushed to the Polyclinic Hospital and died without revealing the name of his assailant.

On March 23, 1929, police found Blubber Devlin's nude form in a field in North Jersey. He had been brutally tortured. His eyes were gouged out, tongue lacerated, fingernails pulled out, shot three times, and his body horribly burned.

Red Moran's body was discovered in a burning automobile on the edge of the Newark city dump. He, too, had been tortured, shot, and his body burned.

The two murders set New Jersey cops to working on the case in order to stop what appeared to them a spreading gang war. They learned that Moran had a girl friend, a pretty 18-year-old blond, named Anna Margaret Orbas, who had left her West Virginia mining-town home several months earlier to seek a career as a dancer.

She met Red Moran in a dance hall and became his mistress. She didn't know that she had signed her death warrant when she talked to the cops. She became a hunted little animal, a scared rabbit fearful in the bright light of the day and the darkness of the night, fearful of every footstep behind her, a knock on her door, a cruising sedan.

She hid in a dozen different places under as many names, snatched a quick sandwich or a cup of coffee when she was hun-

gry and then ran, headlong into oblivion.

Diamond caught up with her on March 24, 1930 as she stood on the corner of Amsterdam and 83rd Street, where she was to meet a girl friend who had promised to hide her out.

She was flushed out of the Harlem River. Her body was trussed with piano wire and she had been beaten severely. The medical examiner added the final cruel words, "She was alive when thrown into the river."

That was Jack "Legs" Diamond.

Jimmy The Knife Batto got his a short time later. The cops found his body in a parked car on Fifth Avenue and 107th Street. His face had been slashed, his body tortured, and he had been shot several times.

During this time, Legs did not reveal to Schultz that he knew the Dutchman had been in on the plot to kill Eddie. He had taken over the Catskills from the independents by the usual methods of the underworld.

Muscle, intimidation, torture, kidnapping, and simple, wanton murder.

Harry Western, one of the independents who thought he could oppose Diamond, was lured from his home by a fake phone call, kidnaped, taken to a lonely road, where he was tortured and beaten. While still alive his body was thrown into a rock crusher, passed through a cement mixer, and he became a part of the road between Kingston and Saugerties.

The word was passed around and all the other independents who had resisted Diamond gave in. The Catskills belonged to Legs.

Eddie meanwhile died a peaceful death in a TB sanitorium at Saranac Lake, New York, and all Legs had left now was his wife Alice and Marian "Kiki" Roberts, his mistress, one of the most beautiful show girls ever seen on Broadway.

Legs met Kiki Roberts, then only seventeen years old, when she was trying out for a part in the chorus of a Broadway show in which he, Lucky Luciano, and several other big-time hoods had invested money.

It wasn't that they were interested in the profits the show might bring them but because it gave them an opportunity to play with the dolls in the chorus or to place one of their girl friends in the line. Legs, Luciano, Albert Anastasia, and Pittsburgh Phil Strauss, a Murder Incorporated gunman, were watching the rehearsals and when they saw Marian Roberts their eyes bugged out.

"Who the hell does *that* belong to?" Pittsburgh Phil asked.

"Me!" Diamond answered quickly. "I put her in the show."

He hadn't. It was the first time he had ever seen her, but he claimed her for his own at that

moment. After rehearsals he went backstage and sought her out.

"You want a part in this show, Gorgeous?" he asked her.

"Yes, sir," she answered meekly, thinking he was one of the producers of the show.

"Okay, you're in. Now get dressed and come with me. You're my girl now."

"I am?" the beautiful young redhead asked. "But I don't know your name."

"Jack Diamond. Diamond, get it? You'll be wearing lots of them. Now hurry up, we got things to do."

She gave him a big smile. "Sure, Jack. Right away."

Legs installed Marian in a suite in the Monticello Hotel. As soon as he got her into the suite he said, "Honey, what's your real name? I know it isn't Roberts.

"Strasmick. Marian Strasmick."

"Okay. Now, did you run away from home?"

"Yes. Are you going to send me back?"

Legs laughed. "Do I look nuts? Come here."

She came into his arms. "Be good to me, Jack. I'll do anything you want me to do only be good to me."

"Honey, from now on it's going to be good for you, in every way."

For the first time in his life, through all the violences and killings that lay behind him, he discovered within himself a kind of gentleness to which he never had admitted. He held that soft, yielding body closer, and then he seized her fiercely to him. He kept her locked in the room for three days, had all their meals sent up, and kept in touch with his gang by phone.

Vincent Coll, his lieutenant, said, "What the hell are you doing up there anyway? We got work to do."

"Take care of it, Vince. I'm taking a little rest."

"Rest hell! You've got that little redheaded trick up there with you, that's the rest you're taking. Come on, Legs, throw her out and get down to business. That lousy Dutchman is running wild again. I've been gunning for him for three days. He's out to get you. That's the word."

"Do you know where he's at?"

"No. Lemme come up and talk to you. This is serious. We can't talk about it over the phone."

"Okay. Come on up." Legs hung up and turned to Kiki. "Honey, one of my friends is coming up for a talk. When he comes up you go down to the restaurant and get yourself a cup of coffee or something. Take some money off the dresser."

"How much should I take?"

"Take a hundred. Maybe you're a big tipper." He laughed at his own little joke.

"I need some clothes. Can I buy a dress and some undies?"

"Sure. Take a grand then. Hurry up now, he'll be here in a minute."

Coll arrived before Kiki could leave. He gave her a look and let out a long whistle. "Well, I can see why you've been holed up here for a year. You got a sister, Baby?"

She smiled sweetly. "Nope. Just one of a kind." She smiled again and closed the door behind her.

"Legs," Coll said, "Schultz has his boys out looking for you. He says he's going to get that hundred grand you owe him or your life. But he wants mostly your life. I'll tell you something else. Lucky Luciano is with him. They want to take over the Catskills. Lucky says you beat him out of a lot of dough on the last dope shipment."

LEGS DIAMOND had made a deal with the Eliopoulos brothers, the drug barons of the Continent, when he went to Europe as Arnold Rothstein's representative. He had told the brothers he was the buyer and that if they worked with him he would buy at least a million dollars worth of stuff from them a year.

Luciano became his partner. Legs couldn't be right with anyone and double-crossed Lucky, Schultz, Madden, Rothstein, and everyone else with whom he went into a deal.

"You mean the boys can't fight the Dutchman? What the hell's the matter with them?" Diamond asked Coll.

"They can't find him, that's the matter with them! Hymie Cohen, Vannie Higgins, and Charlie Entratta said he's holed up somewhere. I got the word he's hiding out in one of Polly Adler's joints."

Polly Adler was a notorious madam who ran houses at 35 West 64th, 65 Central Park West, 30 East 55th, and at 151 West 74th. Legs gave Coll the addresses.

"Her personal homes are at 30 East 55th and at 245 East 30th." Legs said. "Put some of the boys to watching the two houses."

"Who? We got two loads of alcohol to take up to the Catskills. Who do you want me to put on?"

"Dan Sawtell, Jack Dalton, Louie Figuro, and Windy Hanley. They aren't much good for anything else. If they see him, tell them to get in touch with you or me."

"You gonna be here?"

"Here or at the Club. I'm leaving now."

Legs first went to his apartment on East 70th Street, and from there called Charlie Entratta and asked him to meet him at the Hotsy Totsy Club that evening. He then

went to his warehouse to supervise the loads of alcohol that were being taken to the Catskills.

When that was done he went back to the Monticello, spent a few hours with Kiki and told her he was going to the Club. He met Entratta there and the two sat at the bar having a drink and talking business when three tough hoods from the waterfront named William "Red" Cassidy, his brother Pete, and Simon "Sy" Walker, an ex-con, came in.

They took over a table close to where Legs and Entratta were sitting, ordered drinks, and then made a lot of insulting remarks about double-crossing Irish bastards.

Legs Diamond gave the three dirty looks and then Red picked an argument with him.

Little Hymie Cohen, Diamond's partner in the Club, told the orchestra to play something loud. The orchestra did, and then Legs and Entratta pulled guns. Legs riddled Red and his brother Pete while Entratta took care of Sy Walker. As Red lay on the floor his body twitched. Legs uttered a curse.

"Still alive, eh? You dirty sonofabitch!" He pointed the gun at Red's head and fired two more slugs.

The place emptied in less than a minute. When the cops came they found only two busboys in the kitchen. They had been busy washing dishes, all night, they said, and heard nothing, saw nothing, didn't even know the place was empty. This left the police with no evidence other than the three corpses, and no witnesses. A conviction for the killings was impossible.

Johnny Cordes, a tough cop assigned to the Broadway sector who became as famed as Johnny Broderick for handling gun-crazy hoods, said:

"That Diamond is a real sonofabitch. Nobody likes him except dames. Guys like Bill Dwyer, Big Frenchy, or Bill Duffey aren't trigger-happy punks. You leave them alone and they'll leave you alone. But that lousy skinny Diamond is a mean bastard. I think he gets a kick out of killing. Some day somebody is going to catch up with him. I hope it's us."

Somebody did catch up with him. On a day in October, 1930, Waxey Gordon paid Legs a visit in the Monticello Hotel. Waxey was once associated with Diamond but left him to spread out on his own. He had taken over a big portion of New Jersey, with the help of Joe Adonis and Lucky Luciano.

Gordon also worked closely with Schultz and the two bosses of Murder Inc., Buchalter and Shapiro. As a big importer of narcotics, most of which was shipped to him by Eliopoulos brothers, he wasn't too popular with Diamond.

Legs felt Waxey had muscled in on his connections.

"Legs," Waxey said, "the boys are getting worried about you. They think you're getting too big for your pants, a little too trigger happy. Those killings in the Hotsy Totsy were bad. Those guys had a lot of friends."

Legs moved away from Waxey, walked to the dresser at the far end of the room and picked up a pistol. "Waxey, let me tell you something. They think I'm getting too big for my pants? You tell them I'm not big enough yet. Vince Coll and I are going to take our share in New York. And this is going to be the persuader."

Diamond twirled the gun around meaningfully. "Nobody's pushing us around."

"You're biting off an awful piece, Legs. You may not be able to swallow it."

"I'll swallow it. Listen, I made the deal with the two Eliopoulos brothers. So what happened? Lucky moved in through his connections in Italy, and then you took a slice of the action too. That left me out in the cold. Now I have to get my stuff from Chicago through Capone. I'll give you a little information. Capone and I have an agreement. If I need his help I'll get it. You can pass that word around."

"The boys know all that, Legs. But you're forgetting one very important thing. Capone is Italian. So are the guys you want to push. They speak the same language. An Irishman hasn't got much of a chance unless he wants to play along."

"So is Coll," Legs retorted. "That gives us a little edge."

Waxey shook his head regretfully. "Legs, the boys are willing to listen to reason. You can have a slice of the action in New York but you'll have to be nice. Cut out the rough stuff."

"Waxey, tell the boys to go to hell!"

The boys didn't like that kind of talk. It irritated their sensitive feelings. Several days later two men knocked on the door of room 829 in the Monticello Hotel. Kiki opened the door.

"Where's Legs?" one of the men asked.

"In the bedroom, asleep. Shall I wake him?"

"No, sweetheart. We'll wake him. Now, you go downstairs to the restaurant and have a cup of coffee and everything will be just dandy for you. You're a very pretty girl and we've been told not to hurt you. So far as you know, you never saw us, never saw a thing, you were in the restaurant having a cup of coffee. Understand?"

Kiki's face went white, and she started to tremble. "You—you aren't going to—"

"Yes, we are, sweetheart. Now do as you're told."

"But what'll I do after— I mean, God, I don't know what I mean. Jack and I—"

"Sweetheart, with your looks you'll do a helluva lot better when this is over. Go ahead. We don't have much time."

Kiki snatched up a coat and stumbled out the door. The two killers walked into the bedroom, shook Legs awake. When he opened his eyes he was staring into the muzzles of two guns.

"The boys are here, Legs," one of the men said. "This is it. Good-by."

Legs started to say something but the words never came out. Both guns exploded. He was hit five times, his blood splattering the wall and staining the bedclothes.

Kiki watched from a remote corner in the foyer until she saw the two men come out of the elevator and walk into the street and then she raced for the elevator. Inside the bedroom she saw Legs' blood-covered face and let out a wild scream. She snatched up the telephone.

"Operator, quick, call an ambulance. Mr. Diamond's been shot! Hurry! Hurry!"

The operator called the police. Legs was rushed to a hospital. The miracle of his luck held. He was going to recover.

When he was able to be questioned by the police he said he didn't know who had shot him. "They were strangers. I never saw them before in my life."

BUT LEGS DIAMOND had. When he was released from the hospital he and Vincent Coll tortured, burned, and killed eight of Schultz' men. They then spotted Schultz in Harlem and chased him up and down 125th Street, up and down Lenox Avenue, and up and down 7th Avenue, firing from two machine guns. The Dutchman had a good driver and escaped with his life.

Reprisals followed. Once again Legs was shot and again he recovered. He moved to Acra until the heat cooled off. While he was there, the Syndicate caught up with Charlie Entratta and shot him dead along with three other minor henchmen.

Gunmen followed Diamond to the Catskills. As he was leaving the Aratoga Inn at Cairo, gunmen opened up on him with shotguns. One slug imbedded itself in Legs' right lung, another punctured his liver, one struck him in the back as he spun and fell, and a fourth lodged in his arm. This time, everyone thought, he was as good as dead. He should have been, but he recovered after a long siege in the hospital.

He should have quit then and there but he was stubborn and wild for vengeance. It was incomprehensible to him that all the forces of his underworld enemies

could destroy him. He was like the sea's fury after he came out of the hospital, killing wantonly in New York and then racing back to the Catskills.

He neglected his bootlegging business in the Catskills and a large booze syndicate made up of local hoods moved in. They transported their moonshine liquor in huge trucks. He set out to break up their business.

He thought he had one of the trucks spotted while driving along a road with Kiki Roberts and a rugged hood named Johnny Scaccio. He tailed the truck and stopped it at a lonely spot.

"You carrying beer or white?" he asked the driver. The latter was a common name for the colorless alcohol then sold as whisky after cutting and coloring it.

The driver, Grover Parks, replied that he was hauling cider. In the truck with him was a young man, a teenager named Jimmy Duncan who was a helper. Legs didn't believe Parks and forced him and the boy at gunpoint to get into the sedan.

Kiki took the wheel, Legs covered Parks and young Duncan with his gun, and Scaccio drove the truck to Diamond's farm in Acra.

Legs ordered Parks and the boy to remove their shoes. He held lighted matches against the soles of their feet, punched them, and still the two insisted they were only carrying cider. Legs then hauled Parks outside and tied a noose around his neck. He threw the rope over a tree. He stood Parks on a high box, tightened the rope and then pushed the box out from under Parks' feet.

Parks dangled from the rope, kicked his feet in violent reaction, gasped for breath, and finally strangled into a blue unconsciousness. Legs let him down, laid him on the ground and revived him. Parks still insisted he was carrying nothing but cider.

Legs held a conference with Scaccio and decided to let the two, Parks and the boy Duncan, go.

"We're going to let you go," he said. "But remember this, if you squawk to the cops we'll come and get you. Now beat it."

Parks went directly to the cops and told his story. They raced to the farm and arrested Legs, Scaccio, and Kiki and charged them with kidnapping, assault and attempted murder. He was released in high bail, as were Scaccio and Kiki. He then set out to win over the people of Acra because he knew that from among them would come the twelve jurymen who would sit in judgment on him.

Legs showed himself in town, contributed to the churches, to charities, to any and all requests. He was charming, winsome, a perfect gentleman. He took Alice

along with him whenever he went into town, shopped with her in all the stores, showed himself to be a model husband and a good citizen. When he, Kiki and Scaccio went to trial he was virtually a hero. He presented evidence and witnesses that he was in New York at the time of the alleged kidnaping and so couldn't have been involved.

The jury acquitted him and Kiki but convicted Scaccio, who presented no alibi. Scaccio got fifteen years.

Legs Diamond threw a big party to celebrate his acquittal. It was held in Young's Cafe in Albany. It was a big night for Diamond. He made new plans. He was going back to New York and take over. He and Vincent Coll would run Schultz and Luciano right out of town.

Shortly after one o'clock in the morning, Legs left the party. He told Alice he had to see some people about some important business and to stay with the party because he would be back as soon as he finished. His important business was with Kiki in a Ten Broeck Street apartment.

He told Kiki they would leave for Chicago to rest up for a week. "I want to see my friend Al Capone on some business."

"Jack," Kiki said, and there was a weariness in her voice, "we're going to leave all right. You're going to leave for Chicago and I'm going to leave you. I've had it. I can't take any more. I'm going to try to get back into show business where it's nice and peaceful. This is good-by."

Legs tried to persuade her to stay but she was adamant. He left her and went to the rooming house on Dove Street, where he had rented a room because none of the hotels would have him. He lay down on the bed and went to sleep, forgetting, and not caring, that Alice was still waiting patiently for him to return to the party.

At 5:30 in the morning, two men walked into the rooming house, located Legs' room, saw him asleep on the bed. They stood over him, taut with insolence and disdain, knowing that at last the lizard had left the sun and crawled into the deep shadows from which there was no escape.

No, there was no tomorrow, no night and no day. Not anymore. The grim end of life was as imminent as the next second, explosive, violent, inexorably final. They leveled their pistols and fired directly into his brain.

Legs was buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Paspeth, Long Island, unsung, unmourned except for the tears of the patient Alice. Kiki Roberts was conspicuous by her absence.

Vincent Coll was slain shortly after in a telephone booth, machine-gunned by imported Chi-

cago gunmen. It seemed that some of the other boys in New York also had friends in the Windy City.

Kiki never did achieve the place in show business she wanted. She did manage to work in several burlesque shows and as a fan dancer. She disappeared from the New York scenes and has never been heard of since.

The ironic and tragic end to Diamond's career is not what happened to him, Vincent Coll, or to Kiki Roberts. They knew what they were getting into. It's what happened to Alice, who never knew a really happy moment with her husband.

On June 30, 1933, plumbers were let into an apartment at 1641 Ocean Avenue in Brooklyn. On the floor, in an ugly pool of blood, was the body of a young woman, a comely blond, who had been shot to death. She was identified as Alice Diamond.

No one knew why she was killed. Maybe the gangs wanted this last reprisal against Legs. Maybe someone remembered what Legs had done to Margaret Orbas. She was a good woman who never said an unkind word to anyone or about anyone.

Alive or dead, Legs Diamond blackened everything and everyone he touched, directly or indirectly. But this one the boys should have left alone.

The underworld speaks a strange, harsh, and bitter language, and no one spoke it more cruelly than Jack "Legs" Diamond.

Ask anyone who knew him.

Coming in the JUNE issue:

LOUIS "LEPKE" BUCHALTER: LAST OF THE MASS MURDERERS

Another Sensational New TRUE Crime Gangland Thriller

by DAVID MAZROFF

Death was the name of the game, and they played it to the bloody hilt, the nightmare army of killers they called Murder, Incorporated. They were the most fearsome army of depraved blood merchants ever assembled in one place, led by a thin little monster who was the deadliest of all. Meet Louis Lepke—Pale Little Man of Death

HOWDY

Wisely, well had he woven his web of death. His tracks were covered, his hands were clean. Only the dark Everglades had seen his deed. No one, he knew, could ever guess his secret. No one . . . ?

by RICHARD DEMING

THE BOAT WAS merely a small platform on pontoons with seats for two people. It was powered by a motor with a propellor similar to an airplane propellor, except that it was in the rear instead of in front and was encased in a protective frame of steel wire.

The propellor was entirely above water and moved the boat forward by thrusting against the air behind it. The boat skimmed along the narrow, sometimes only inches-deep channels at breath-taking speed.

Deep in the Everglades Andrew Tarbold suddenly cut the engine and allowed the boat to drift. The blond, handsome and rather muscular man in the other seat threw an inquiring glance at the professional guide.

"The channel's over twelve feet deep here," Tarbold said. "You ought to get plenty of hits."

Philip Reppert opened his tackle box and selected a lure. He clipped the lure to a three-foot leader and clipped the other end of the leader to the end of his casting rod line. He made an expert cast of about fifty feet and slowly reeled in the lure.

He had recovered the lure and was raising his rod for a second cast when through some thick mangrove trees and underbrush on a nearby island he spotted a small hut.

Lowering the rod again, he

said to the guide, "Hey, somebody lives in this awful place?"

"Oh, that's old Howdy Bascomb's shack," Tarbold said. "They call him Howdy because that's about all he ever says. He's a nice enough old coot, but he doesn't hold much with conversation. He's lived out here all alone for years."

"What's he exist on?" Reppert asked, staring at the hut.

"Traps possum for meat, fishes and has a little vegetable garden on the island. He also has a pension from World War I and draws

Social Security. During World War Two he came out of retirement to work in a defense plant for a while, which made him eligible for Social Security. He hardly spends anything, so he's probably got more money salted away than you and me put together."

Mention of money always made Philip Reppert prick up his ears.

"What's he do with it?" he asked.

The guide shrugged. "Probably keeps it hid in his mattress. He don't believe in banks. Most likely, when he finally dies, you'll read in the papers that they found a fortune in his shack. That's always happening with these old hermits who live like they got nothing at all."

While Reppert was absorbing this interesting bit of speculation, a lean, bearded man of about seventy suddenly appeared from the underbrush no more than fifteen feet from the boat.

He was dressed in denims, a flannel shirt, knee boots and a battered felt hat.

"Howdy," he said.

Philip Reppert replied with a startled, "Hello."

Andrew Tarbold, apparently used to the old man's unexpected materializations, raised his hand in a lazy salute and said, "How are you, Howdy? This is Mr. Reppert from Miami Beach."

The old man nodded silently. Reppert said he was glad to know him.

"Got the coffee pot on?" Tarbold asked.

Howdy Bascomb nodded again, face impassive.

"Like a cup of coffee?" the guide asked Reppert. "We'll be welcome. Howdy don't talk much, but he's right hospitable. Makes good coffee too, if you like it strong."

Philip Reppert wasn't particularly interested in socializing with an aged hermit, but he sensed a business opportunity and, although he was on vacation at the moment, he never liked to pass up possible business opportunities. His business was thievery and he was quite successful at it. To a large extent his success was due to his thorough knowledge of the kind of evidence cops looked for and the pains he took to avoid leaving such evidence. His knowledge came from fifteen years on a metropolitan police force, half of it as a detective second grade on the burglary squad.

He would still have been a cop if he hadn't been boarded for shaking down a burglary suspect for his loot instead of arresting him.

"All right," Reppert agreed. "If it won't be an imposition."

Tarbold circled the island to a small wooden dock on its other side and tied up the boat. The old man had crossed over to it by

the time they got there. He silently led the way to his hut.

It was only a one-room place furnished with a single bunk, a wooden table with four chairs, a counter containing a couple of wash basins and a water pitcher, a kerosene stove and a single small storage cabinet in one corner. A gasoline lantern, now unlit, hung

from a ceiling hook. Wooden pegs around the walls contained clothing, tools, fishing and trapping gear, a rifle and a shotgun. With all its clutter, the place was immaculately clean.

As Howdy silently got three thick porcelain cups from the corner cabinet and poured them full from a pot simmering on the stove, Tarbold said in an aside to Reppert, "He put on the coffee soon as he saw us. Told you he was hospitable."

As the guide had indicated, Howdy Bascomb wasn't much for conversation. As they sipped the strong coffee, Reppert tried to draw out the old man, but although he remained friendly enough in a withdrawn sort of way, his answers consisted mainly of nods or headshakes, with an occasional audible yes or no.

They stayed only about twenty minutes, but Reppert thoroughly noted every detail of the place during that time. If the old man possessed the hoard of money which the guide surmised, there were only three places it could be concealed in the hut, the ex-detective decided. Either it was buried beneath the dirt floor, was in the cabinet, or was beneath the bunk, which had a quilt hanging to the floor.

When they finally left, Reppert cautiously felt out Andrew Tarbold about the old man's habits. He learned that the only occasions Howdy Bascomb left his secluded home for any length of time was his quarterly visits to a small town on the edge of the Everglades.

Regularly four times a year he rowed the twelve miles, stocked up with supplies and rowed back. Tarbold said he always made the trip on the first Monday of the month in January, April, July and October.

As it was now mid-January, Reppert realized he would have to wait until the first Monday of April. When he returned to his apartment in Miami Beach, he checked a calendar and discovered this would be April 1st.

While waiting for the three-month period to pass, the ex-detective pulled two other successful burglaries, both in Miami. In

both cases he was a prime suspect, as usual, but also as usual he left no evidence to justify an arrest.

The police were quite aware that Reppert was a thief, and it had become so routine for them to question him about burglaries that by mutual agreement the Miami police and the Miami Beach police had long ago eliminated all jurisdictional red tape insofar as Philip Reppert was concerned.

Since Reppert was a Miami Beach resident, according to general police procedure a Miami Beach cop should at least have been present when police from other areas wanted to question him on his home grounds.

But Miami police so often had wanted to question him that the Miami Beach chief had given blanket permission for Miami cops to pick up Philip Reppert whenever they wished to without even checking in at Miami Beach headquarters.

Detective Lieutenant Donald Muir of the Miami burglary squad was the investigating officer in both cases. Muir was a plodding, placid man of about Reppert's age, forty. He tended to amuse Reppert, because he always gave the impression he knew his questioning of the ex-detective was a waste of time, but he had to go through the motions. Actually Reppert got a mild lift from his encounters with Lieutenant Muir, and felt a little let down when the lieutenant failed to question him after a job.

Reppert pulled the first job, the cracking of a safe in a psychiatrist's office, on a Sunday night a couple of weeks after his fishing jaunt. Monday morning, January 29th, Lieutenant Donald Muir dropped around just as Reppert was leaving for a doctor's appointment. Reppert was waiting for the apartment house elevator on the fifth floor when the liuetenant stepped out of it.

Holding the door open, Reppert said, "If you're looking for me, lieutenant, I have a medical appointment, so I'm afraid you'll have to postpone whatever it is."

Shrugging, the detective stepped back into the car. They descended together.

"Who's your doctor?" Muir asked.

"Dr. Fox, over in the new Medical Building."

"That's not far," Muir said. "I'll run you over and back, so we can talk en route, if you're not going to be held up too long. What's your complaint?"

"It's just a routine visit. I go in regularly every three months to get my ears flushed out."

The burglary officer stared at him. The elevator came to a stop on the main floor and the door opened.

As they walked toward the street together, Lieutenant Muir

said, "Why do you have to have them flushed out so often?"

"I'm one of those people who form ear wax too rapidly. That's fairly common, but most people don't do anything about it because it isn't serious. Most people usually aren't even aware they have the condition, because it seldom causes any discomfort, has little effect on hearing, and once the ear cavity is completely blocked by wax, the formation stops. I just don't happen to like having my ear passages full of wax, so I have Dr. Fox squirt them out periodically. It's quite painless and makes me feel cleaner afterward."

En route to the doctor's office, and again on the way home, Lieutenant Muir asked the usual questions and got the usual slightly mocking answers. No, Reppert had no particular alibi for last night; he usually spent Sunday nights home alone. No, he had never heard of Dr. Henry Cooper, the burglary victim. No, he wasn't familiar with the building where the psychiatrist had his office, yes he knew the neighborhood.

The lieutenant even tried the hoary trick of exaggerating the take by casually remarking that the safe-cracker had gotten away with twenty-five hundred dollars. The actual amount in the safe had been eleven hundred. Reppert was supposed to react by involuntarily allowing indignation to show at the victim's attempt to cheat his insurance company by reporting that the loss was greater than it really was.

Instead Reppert merely clucked sympathetically and said, "Tough on even a high-priced head shrinker to drop that much."

The second job, toward the end of February, actually got Reppert pulled in for questioning, but the police had no more evidence than usual, and had to release him after a couple of hours. Probably the only reason he was pulled in was that the loot was the charity fund of a local church, and the nature of the theft incensed the cops. The take was only nine hundred dollars.

As always Reppert planned the Howdy Bascomb job so that no clues could point to him. In February he bought a twelve-foot skiff and a twenty-five-horsepower outboard motor, plus a trailer to haul the boat. As it was too small a boat for the ocean, he hauled it up to one of the inland lakes for a couple of weekends in order to justify his purchase of it. He rented a lakeside cottage each time so that there would be a record of his being there.

On Sunday, March 31st, he pulled the boat on its trailer to a secluded spot at the edge of the Everglades. Early in the afternoon he put the boat into the water.

The previous January, during the trip back from the island where Howdy Bascom lived,

Reppert had carefully committed to memory every twist and turn of the channels. Since then he had mentally gone over the route so many times that he had no difficulty finding his way.

By dusk he had reached a point about a mile from the island. He found a side channel where overhanging vegetation would conceal the boat, wrapped himself in a blanket and slept until dawn.

He was awake by first light, but he remained concealed in the side channel. About an hour after dawn he heard the sound of oars. Peering through the undergrowth in the direction of the main channel, he saw old Howdy Bascomb row by in a flat-bottomed skiff.

He waited a full hour after the old man passed, so that he would be beyond earshot of the outboard motor. Even then, knowing how far sound could travel over water, he throttled the motor way down when he resumed his journey. There was no hurry, because Howdy's twenty-four-mile round trip in the rowboat would take until dark that night.

Reppert had no difficulty getting into the hut, because the door wasn't even locked. Pulling on a pair of gloves, he began his search.

It didn't take very long, because there weren't very many places to search. There wasn't a cent in the hut. He went outside and tramped around the island for a time, but quickly gave up that idea and returned to the hut. During a second search he paid closer attention to a notebook he had seen and ignored the first time.

It proved to be a ledger meticulously listing all income and expenditures clear back to 1929, with balances recorded at the bottom of each page. When Reppert added up the few entries on the last page and added the total to the balance at the bottom of the previous page, the sum came to $12,478.

That figure had to be the amount of Howdy Bascomb's hoard, Reppert reasoned. It was worth tearing the whole island apart.

By dusk Reppert still hadn't found the money. And by then the old man was due back at any moment.

Up to now Philip Reppert had carefully limited his criminal activity to burglary and theft. If he had planned anything more violent than that for Howdy Bascomb, he wouldn't have waited three months to pull the job. But he had an aversion to crimes of violence. Not on moral grounds; merely from the standpoint of self-preservation. From his own background as a cop he had too healthy a respect for scientific crime investigation. He was thoroughly aware of the miracles which could be performed in the modern police lab.

Even as careful as he was, Reppert knew that someday he might accidentally leave some tiny clue at the scene of a crime which could convert to convicting evidence. If and when that happened, he preferred to be confronted with the probability of serving no more than a couple of years in prison.

In Florida they electrocuted you for murder.

But also up to now he had never run into an opportunity to make as much as twelve thousand dollars from a single job.

He was still weighing the risk against the potential profit when old Howdy Bascomb took the decision out of his hands by returning.

By then dusk had fallen and Reppert had lit the gasoline lantern which hung from a ceiling hook. Glancing out, he saw a light approaching the dock. The old man had a lantern burning in his boat too.

It was too late for Reppert to escape unseen, because by the time he got down to the dock and got his outboard motor started, Howdy would be pulling in. Nor was it possible for Reppert to pass off his visit as merely a friendly drop-in, not the way the interior of the hut looked.

The old man had taken along his rifle, but had left his shotgun behind. Reppert lifted it down from the wall pegs it lay across,

checked to make sure it was loaded and carried it down to the dock.

Howdy Bascomb shipped his oars and drifted the last few yards to the dock. As the boat gently nudged the dock, he looked up and said, "Howdy."

"Howdy," Reppert said, pointing the shotgun. "Don't reach for that rifle. Just tie up and get out."

IT TOOK THREE hours and a half a pack of cigarettes to make the old man tell where the money was secreted. By then he was unable to lead the way to it because the bottoms of his feet were in no condition to walk on. He had to give directions.

Reppert left the old man tied to his bunk and carried the gasoline lantern outside. He located the mangrove stump near the center of the island without difficulty. When he examined it closely under the bright glare of the lantern, he could see the thin lines show-

ing where its roots had been sawed through.

Setting down the lamp, he shoved against the stump's north side. It was hinged on its south side. The stump heeled over, exposing a cavity in the ground beneath it.

A small iron-bound chest about two feet long by a foot wide lay in the cavity.

Except for a small pile of bills totaling seventy-eight dollars, the money was all in hundred dollar bills, some so ancient they were the old-fashioned oversized type pre-dating the Roosevelt administration. It seemed obvious that it was Howdy's custom to convert his savings into that denomination whenever he accumulated another hundred.

The figure Reppert had found in the notebook inside proved to be accurate. He counted one hundred twenty-four hundred-dollar bills in addition to the loose seventy-eight dollars. Divided into two stacks, the money easily fitted into his jacket pockets.

Of course it was impossible to leave old Howdy Bascomb alive as a witness against him. Reppert returned to the hut long enough to do what had to be done, took a final look around, put out the lantern and left.

Philip Reppert was reasonably certain he would be a prize suspect when the crime was discovered. The list of the old hermit's acquaintances couldn't be long, and it was inevitable that the police would quickly get to the guide, Andrew Tarbold, who in turn would immediately direct them to Reppert as one of the clients he had taken to the old man's island.

On the principle that if you expect the worst, you are always prepared to meet whatever problem arises, Reppert assumed that Tarbold would tell the police about the detailed questions he had asked concerning Howdy Bascomb's habits. He really expected the police to become morally convinced that he was the killer.

Moral conviction and proof were two different things, however. The police had so often been convinced of his guilt without being able to prove a thing that he wasn't particularly worried. He merely decided to take even more unusual precautions than he ordinarily did.

In his years on the burglary squad in his home town Reppert had seen many burglars convicted on the basis of bits of microscopic evidence they had unknowingly carried from the scenes of crimes.

Under spectrographic examination, for example, a spot of mud scraped from a suspect's heel might match the soil composition of a garden plot the burglar had walked through.

In one of his cases a single grain of sand gleaned from a sus-

pect's trouser cuff had gotten a conviction. In another, invisible bits of wood dust stirred up by a burglar walking across the unswept floor of a lumber mill had become imbedded in the fabric of his trousers and sent him to prison.

When Reppert got home, about two in the morning, he immediately began to make sure no microscopic evidence would be found on him which might establish he had been anywhere near old Howdy Bascomb's island.

He had worn the clothing in which he ordinarily went fishing: an old army suntan shirt and slacks, a cloth jacket, a cloth cap with a stiff brim and G.I. combat boots.

Stripping, he thoroughly vacuumed all his clothing, including his underwear and socks. He paid particular attention to pockets, turning each inside out and running the vacuum over it several times. The vacuum cleaner was the type which had disposable paper liners.

When he finished, he emptied the vacuum and wrapped the liner in a piece of newspaper. He dropped it down the incinerator chute into the incinerator in the basement.

Then he scrubbed his combat boots with soap and water. While they were drying, he showered and shampooed his head. When he got out of the shower, he spread polish over the still not quite dry boots and buffed them to a high luster.

He still wasn't finished with his precautionary measures, but that was all he could do that night. There was no particular rush—it was unlikely that Howdy Bascomb's body would be discovered for at least a matter of days. He went to bed.

He was up early enough the next morning to be at the bank when it opened. He put all of the loot from the job except the odd seventy-eight dollars in his safe-deposit vault.

Just in case the vacuuming hadn't destroyed all microscopic evidence clinging to his clothes, when he returned from the bank he carried all the clothing he had worn the previous day to a laundromat around the corner from his apartment and washed it.

Then he thought of the boat. Something might have settled into it which the crime lab could use to prove it had been deep in the Everglades. He scrubbed it down with soap and water, inside and out, then carefully wiped off the motor with a rag soaked in gasoline.

Now the crime lab could do its damnedest, he thought. *Nothing* could place him near the scene of the crime.

Two full weeks passed before Howdy Bascomb's body was discovered. About the middle of April there was a report of its

discovery in the paper. The same guide who had taken Reppert to the island was the person who found him. According to the item, Andrew Tarbold was one of the few people who ever visited the old man.

It didn't take the police long to get to Philip Reppert. The next morning three of them showed up —a deputy sheriff from the area where the crime had occurred, a Miami Beach detective and Lieutenant Donald Muir.

Since the case was completely out of the latter's jurisdiction, apparently he was along simply because he felt a proprietory interest in Reppert.

They took him down to Miami Beach police headquarters for questioning.

Reppert used the same technique he had used on the several previous occasions he had been questioned about various crimes. He calmly denied everything and challenged the police to prove his guilt.

Since he was quite sure it had been Andrew Tarbold who steered the police to him, he readily admitted having visited Howdy Bascomb's hut with the guide in January, but denied having been anywhere in the Everglades since. Questioned about why he owned a twelve-foot skiff with a motor unsuitable for ocean use, he said he liked freshwater fishing and gratuitously threw in the name and address of the man he had rented his lake cottage from.

He was thoroughly cooperative. He didn't demand to see a lawyer; he didn't insist on either being booked or released. He even gave permission for a search of his apartment, so that the police wouldn't have to bother getting a search warrant.

After several hours of questioning, he was released for lack of evidence.

Lieutenant Muir had to pass near Reppert's apartment house on his way back to Miami. He volunteered to drop Reppert off and save the Miami Beach detective a trip.

En route the lieutenant said, "Feeling pretty smug, aren't you, Reppert?"

His tone made the ex-detective glance at him curiously. "You sound bitter, Lieutenant."

Donald Muir slowly shook his head. "Determined is the right word, Reppert. You've been an irritation to me for some time, but up to now I never really lost any sleep over you. I would have liked to nail you, but you weren't an obsession."

"And now you're obsessed by me?" Reppert asked mockingly.

The lieutenant threw him a cold glance. "I'm going to get you, Reppert. You should have stuck to burglary. Murdering that old man has changed things. Today you stopped being just a minor thorn

in my side and moved to top priority. I'm going to send you to the chair for this one."

Despite his sureness that nothing could ever be proved against him, Philip Reppert was briefly touched by a breath of coldness. He had to force his voice to sound amused.

"It's not even in your jurisdiction, Lieutenant."

"Yeah," Muir said. "It'll just be a labor of love."

WHEN A MONTH passed without Reppert again hearing from the police, he decided that Lieutenant Muir's threat had merely been inspired by frustration. Meantime, just in case he was being kept under surveillance, he made no attempt to pull any other jobs. He didn't make any unusual expenditures either, in case the police were watching to see if he showed any signs of sudden affluence.

Howdy Bascomb's money remained in the safe deposit vault and he went on living at the same economic level he was accustomed to. There was enough in his checking account from previous jobs to carry him for some time.

On Monday, May 27th, he made his regular quarterly visit to Dr. Fox's office to have the wax flushed from his ears. Shortly after one the following afternoon Lieutenant Muir phoned and asked if he would mind dropping by at Miami police headquarters.

Always willing to go through the motions of cooperation, Reppert said he would be there in a half hour.

Lieutenant Muir had a short, smiling, bald-headed man in his office with him. He introduced him as Dr. Morris Klinger.

"Dr. Klinger is not a medical doctor," the lieutenant said. "He's a doctor of science in botany. He's head of the botany department out at the university."

Reppert gave the man a wary handshake, wondering what was up. The lieutenant waved both men to chairs and reseated himself behind his desk.

When they were all settled, Muir said, "Remember that little talk we had the day I drove you home from Miami Beach Headquarters, Reppert?"

"Uh-huh."

"I wasn't just blowing off steam. I've been concentrating on you. I've discussed the Howdy Bascomb case with everybody from that deputy you met to our own district attorney. I've bugged the crime lab personnel about it so much, they got sick of seeing me coming."

"Oh?" Reppert said. "Any success?"

"Some. I kept going over every detail I could remember with the crime lab people, not only about the murder, but about every oth-

er job I figured you had gotten away with in the past. Finally I happened to mention your ear wax problem to Randall over at the lab. He got a bright idea and sent me to see Dr. Klinger. After talking to him, we both went to see Dr. Fox."

"My doctor?" Reppert said in surprise. "Why?"

"To find out when your next appointment was. This was about a week ago, and when we learned you were scheduled to go in yesterday, we asked him to save the wax he flushed out of your ears."

Reppert gazed at him in astonishment. "For what?"

"I'll let Dr. Klinger explain that," the lieutenant said. "It gets a little technical."

Reppert looked at the botanist. The little bald-headed man gazed back at him with what seemed to be a perpetual smile.

"April is a pollen month in the Everglades, Mr. Reppert," he said. "You know what pollen is, I assume."

"Well, yes," the ex-detective said cautiously. "The stuff that gives people hay fever."

"Not exactly," Dr. Klinger said, broadening his smile. "It merely affects people who already have hay fever. At certain times of the year pollen grains are in the air all around us, yet are so tiny we aren't aware of them unless we do suffer from hay fever. They cling to your clothing, your hair, anywhere they can get a grip. They are particularly attracted to anything as gummy as ear wax."

Philip Reppert felt his heartbeat increase slightly, but he managed to keep his voice only politely interested.

"So what?" he said.

"By microscopic examination I isolated six separate pollens in your ear wax, Mr. Reppert. Eucalyptus globulus, or as it is probably better known to you, blue gum. There was also sword fern, magnoliaceae, acacia decurrens, fuchsia and liliaceae. That last is what you call calla lily."

After a period of silence, Reppert repeated, "So what?"

"A couple of days ago I made a field trip, in the company of a sheriff's deputy, to Howdy Bascomb's island in order to study the flora of the area. All six of those pollens were present there. That particular combination isn't present anywhere else in the state that you claim to have been."

"I admitted being there in January," Reppert said quickly.

Lieutenant Muir said, "But you had your ears flushed out on January 29th. Remember, I drove you to the doctor?"

Reppert looked from one man to the other.

"You'll never get a conviction on just that evidence," he said finally.

"No, probably not," Muir agreed. "We're waiting for some

more which I hope will be along any minute."

"Like what?"

"Remember Andrew Tarbold?"

"The guide? Of course. I remember him."

"Tarbold was the only close friend old Howdy had. Some time back the old man gave him a sealed envelope with instructions to open it only in the event of his death. It turned out to be a holographical will leaving his hoard of money to Tarbold and explaining where it was."

"So?" Reppert said.

"Howdy was a methodical old guy. His will not only explained that the bulk of the money was in hundred-dollar bills, but listed all their serial numbers."

Philip Reppert began to sweat.

"We don't think the pollen in your ear wax is enough evidence to convict you," Lieutenant Muir went on. "But it was enough to get a court order to open your safe deposit vault. That deputy you met and the Dade County district attorney are over at the bank now. If those bills are in your box, you're cooked."

In the Next Issue—Complete and Exclusively Yours—

THE GIRL WITH THE TORTURED EYES

A Thrilling New MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Next month's lead novel headlines Mike Shayne in a dramatic lone fight against perhaps the greatest peril he has ever faced. For somewhere, alone, helpless, a frightened girl waits for death, a death only he can avert—at almost the certain cost of his own life. Don't miss this powerful new crime bombshell!

WELCOME TO THE CLUB

Some one in our Party was a traitor. "There's the girl," my chief said. "Or—" He looked at me. I knew what he meant . . .

by Jack Ritchie

COMRADE EDSON stood up, the Sunday newspaper under his arm. "There is the question of security," he said.

"What security?" I asked.

Edson spread the magazine section of the newspaper on the table. "It says here that one-fourth of the members of the Party are in reality F.B.I. agents or informers."

Bernardi clucked his tongue. "Terrible security for the F.B.I. to let something like that leak out."

Edson frowned in his direction. "What I mean, Comrade Bernardi, is what are *we* going to do about it? After all, we four are the central committee for the Great Lakes

region and our people will expect some sort of positive action." He cleared his throat. "We've *got* to initiate something on our own before Headquarters sends somebody out here to do the job for us."

Bridget Standish agreed. "No telling whose head will roll if we leave things to them. But do you have any ideas about how we root out this disloyal twenty-five percent?"

We were all silent for a while. Then I said, "It seems to me that anyone employed by the government to masquerade as a *bona fide* comrade would do his utmost to remain in good standing with the Party. In other words, he would pay his dues promptly."

"Right," Bridget said. "So what we do is check our membership records and when we find anybody who's late with his dues, or delinquent entirely, we know right away that he's a loyal party member."

"Precisely," I said. "That ought to clear about fifty percent of the membership. Unfortunately that still leaves the other fifty percent and half of that may be F.B.I. in one capacity or another."

"Comrades," Bernardi said. "Has it occurred to you that possibly we cannot *afford* to expel so many regular dues-paying members?"

Edson eyed him dubiously. "Comrade Bernardi, are you suggesting that we permit disloyal individuals to remain in the ranks of our glorious party?"

Bernardi wiped some steam from his glasses. "Well, our financial situation is pretty shaky as it is. Couldn't we just take their dues and sort of neutralize them? I mean we could see to it that they never advanced to any important position in the Party and watch our conversation whenever they're present?"

Edson considered and then rejected that. "No. I'm certain Headquarters would never approve anything so radical."

We fell into silence again.

Bridget Standish finally spoke up. "Whatever we do, we've got to meet our quota."

"Quota?" Bernardi asked. "What quota?"

"It must be obvious that the minimal quota for this purge is twenty-five percent of our membership," Bridget said. "If we expel any less than that, Headquarters will think we're falling down on the job."

I nodded. "And, of course, all of you realize that this purge has to be vertical as well as horizontal?"

Bernardi scratched his head. "What do you mean by that, Comrade Turner?"

I studied him for a few moments. "Comrade Bernardi, how long have you been with the Party?"

"Seven years. Why?"

"And, of course, you are a loyal and prompt dues payer?"

"Naturally," he said. "Never been late once."

"Ahha!" I said and glanced significantly at the other two members of the central committee.

Bernardi blinked and then color slowly came to his face. "Now look here, Comrade Turner, paying dues promptly could happen to anyone. It's just one of those things."

I laughed shortly. "And this little suggestion that we ought to retain traitors because of our shaky financial condition, wasn't that just a little ploy to protect yourself?"

"Of course not," Bernardi said a trifle desperately. "I just thought that—well—" He brushed sweat from his forehead.

Bridge seemed to feel sorry for him. "Now, Comrade Bernardi, try to look at it this way. Suppose you really *are* loyal to the Party? Suppose we *all* are loyal to the Party. The fact still remains that we have to meet our quota—come what may. So don't you think that as a *loyal* Party member you could cheerfully accept being purged? For the good of the Party and to fill our quota?"

Bernardi closed his eyes.

I told my story to Captain Walters.

"It was a matter of survival, sir," I said. "I had to act swiftly to divert any suspicion from me."

Walters sighed. "I wish you would not have picked on him."

"Comrade Bernardi seemed the most vulnerable, sir."

Walters studied his folded hands. "The trouble with secrecy is that sometimes it's too secret. For purposes of security, we don't want one finger to know what the other is doing, but at times that can lead to trouble."

"How is that, sir?"

He looked up. "Bernardi's one of our agents. He's been with the Bureau for ten years."

It took me a few moments to digest that. I smiled weakly. "I think we can still salvage the situation, sir. Bernardi hasn't been officially charged by the Party yet. Suppose he and I combine and turn on Edson instead? We ought to be able to make him the goat."

Walters looked out of the window. "No. Not Edson."

I frowned. "You're not going to tell me that—"

Walters nodded. "One of our best informers."

I took a deep breath. "In that case, sir, I suppose the three of us will have to be ungentlemanly and denounce Bridget?"

Walters kept looking out of the window and said nothing.

My voice squeaked. "You don't mean that Bridget is also—"

He nodded again. "We didn't plan things this way, Turner. Each one of you was planted in the party at the bottom and hundreds

(*Please Turn to Page 124*)

You May Have Missed
These (5) SHELL SCOTT Capers

NOW AVAILABLE at 40c FOR EACH COPY

As a reader of MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, you want and expect the best in crime-action. We take pleasure in reminding you that we recently published SHELL SCOTT MYSTERY MAGAZINE and Shell Scott is truly a great headliner in the private eye field. More than forty million readers have thrilled to stories starring hood-hating, lady-loving Shell Scott. We have a limited number of 1966 back copies, only five to be exact and they are yours at forty cents per copy —the five at $2.00. Add Shell Scott to your reading list by filling out the coupon below. You'll be glad you did!

☐ . . **THE DA VINCI AFFAIR by Richard S. Prather** (Feb. 1966)
A purple lady and a green martini can make a deadly brew, particularly when the lady had murder on her mind.

☐ . . **DEAD GIVEAWAY by Richard S. Prather** (March 1966)
She was red-haired, uninhibited, curvy and all woman. Before Scott was aware she had set him up for a bit of folly called Murder!

☐ . . **THE KUBLA KHAN AFFAIR by Richard S. Prather** (April 1966)
A harmful little armful had promised to show Shell Scott a party that would slay him—and she almost did.

☐ . . **BLOOD BALLET by Richard S. Prather** (Sept. 1966)
Shell Scott was told: "Cross that guy and there won't be enough of you left for a funeral." So Shell Scott, naturally, crossed him.

☐ . . **THE CAUTIOUS KILLERS by Richard S. Prather** (Nov. 1966)
All he knew was: one minute there was girl-talk with this tomato, the next minute—bullet talk, meant directly for Shell Scott.

RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
56 WEST 45th St., N. Y., N. Y. 10036

Please send me the back copies of **SHELL SCOTT MYSTERY MAGAZINE** checked off in small boxes above. I enclose 40¢ for each issue in full payment.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY, STATE, ZIP .....

Please print **April—1969**

Love . . . Lust . . . Sudden death . . .
Sometimes they go hand in hand.
And usually Death is the winner.

HELLBOUND

by JONATHAN CRAIG

WHEN MEL TABONE was sure the bomb was as nearly foolproof as he could make it, he put it in a brown paper bag and drove to Jean Connor's house over the rutted back road on which he had never met another car, coming or going, on any of the dozens of times he had traveled it.

The big Connor house was on

a private canal, just off Gator Bayou. He parked in a copse of scrub pine a hundred yards away, where he knew his car would be shielded from both the house and the higway beyond. Carrying the paper bag, he walked quickly to the back door.

Jean Connor was waiting for him, a slender, long-legged young woman with a cameo-perfect face and widely set gray eyes that were at once lovely and somehow hard.

Tabone closed the kitchen door behind him and took her into his arms, but she turned her face away so that his lips bruised her cheek.

"What's wrong?" he said. "You never did that before."

"I was never so scared before, either." She glanced down at the paper bag, and then looked quickly away. "Is that it?"

He smiled.

"It isn't my lunch," he said.

"Isn't it dangerous, carrying it that way? I mean, what if you dropped it or something?"

"I won't," he said. "You just don't drop six sticks of dynamite, Jean."

"Six sticks. That's a lot."

"Enough to scatter his boat all over the county," he said. "And him along with it."

"Mel, I—"

"What's the matter? Don't tell me you're having second thoughts."

"No. It's just that—Mel, I'm afraid something will go wrong."

"Relax. What could go wrong? Howard gets in the boat, turns the ignition key, and —bam! You play the sad young widow for a few months, meanwhile collecting forty thousand dollars double indemnity, plus twenty thousand worth of house, plus maybe another fifteen or twenty thousand in the bank, plus about that much again in stocks and bonds. Altogether, between ninety and a hundred thousand dollars. And then, in another few months, you and I make it legal." He laughed. "What's so scary about a hundred thousand dollars?"

"I'm afraid they'll suspect you. The police."

"Naturally, they'll suspect you. They always suspect the wife. And that's all they can do—suspect. But you'll have plenty of company. Your husband's the most hated man in this part of the state. There're at least a dozen people want Howard Connor dead more than they want anything else on earth." He shook his head. "We've gone over all this a hundred times, Jean."

"I know. But what if the police—"

"The police won't do anything, Jean. They can't. What can they prove? There's nobody even knows about you and me. We've played it too cool and clean. But the police and everybody else know about the enemies Howard's made.

He's ruined at least four men in business, and he's broken up God knows how many homes. He's on the outs with practically every man he knows. He picks fights just for the sheer pleasure of beating other men half to death. He enjoys hurting people, Jean. He brags about what a blast he gets out of it."

Jean turned toward a martini pitcher on the drainboard.

"I think I could use a drink," she said.

"You don't need one," Mel Tabone said, putting out a hand to stop her. "Later, Jean. Later, we'll have a lot of them. After all, we'll have to celebrate our good luck. Or Howard's bad luck, either way you want to put it."

"There's something else," Jean said.

"Like what?"

"I think Howard's suspicious of us."

"That's crazy. How could he be?"

"I don't know. But I think he is."

"You talking about the insurance again?"

"Well, it's odd he wouldn't even question it, isn't it? I mean, when I told him he ought to raise the coverage and make it double indemnity, he didn't even bat an eye. He just went ahead and did it. And he even did the same with my life insurance, too."

"You're just looking for things to worry about, Jean. Besides, what's the difference? Once this bomb goes off—" He shrugged. "What'll his suspicions amount to then, eh?"

"Maybe he has the same idea we do."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, he made my insurance double indemnity too, didn't he? Maybe he's planning the same thing for me that we're planning for him."

Mel Tabone sighed. "Jean, there's not a thing in the world to worry about. Can't you get that through your pretty little head? Nothing's going wrong. Nothing can go wrong. And even if Howard is planning something, he'll never have a chance to do it. There won't be enough of him left to fill a paper bag the size of this one."

She stood looking at him uncertainly for a long moment, worrying her lower lip between small white teeth.

"He deserves to die," she said at last. "If anybody ever did, it's Howard Connor."

"That's the talk," Tabone said. "Now you sound like my girl

again. Let's go down and put this baby where'll it do the most good."

She nodded. "All right. And then we'll come back and have a drink."

"I said, no drinks, Jean. Remember? You'll come back and watch television or something and wait for Howard to come home and take his boat out for his little nightly spin on the bayou. Meanwhile, I'll drive over to the bowling alley, where a lot of people will be able to see me, and listen to see whether I can hear the blast from there."

It took Mel Tabone, working very slowly and carefully, almost a quarter of an hour to attach the dynamite bomb to the ignition wiring of Howard Connor's cabin cruiser. Then he and Jean stood quietly for a moment, listening to the gentle lap of water against the sides of the boat.

Jean shivered.

"What's the matter?" Tabone asked.

"I was just thinking. About what will happen when he turns the key in the ignition."

"Beautiful thought, isn't it?" Tabone said. "Well, let's get out of here, Jean. Howard's probably already on his way home by now."

He helped Jean up onto the dock, and then jumped up after her. And it was then that they both became aware of the man who had just moved from the shadow of the boathouse. He was a big man, bigger by far than Mel Tabone, and the pale slitted eyes in the rock-hard face were like slivers of dirty gray ice.

"Well, well," Howard Connor said as he closed the distance between them. "I wonder what we have here. A little lovers' assignation in the boat, is it?"

"Howard!" Jean gasped.

"Good afternoon, dear," Howard said.

"Howard, we— It isn't what you think, Howard. We—"

"Shut up," Howard said. "I've been on to you two for some time now, sweetheart. You and lover boy here. And so this is where you've been having your little love and games, right here in my boat."

"Listen—" Mel Tabone began.

"You shut up, too," Howard said. "Turn around. Both of you."

"Howard, please," Jean pleaded. "In heaven's name, Howard! What are you going to do?"

Howard's right hand slid inside his jacket and reappeared with a short-barreled revolver. "I told you to turn around," he said.

"Please, Howard," Jean said as she and Mel turned to face the boat. "If you'll only listen. If you'll only—"

"Down in the boat," Howard said. "Hurry it up."

Once they were all aboard, Howard took a roll of adhesive plaster from the first-aid kit and used it to gag Jean and Mel Tabone and then to bind their wrists

and ankles. He was smiling now.

"After a while I'm going to drive your car over to the other side of Indian Lake, Mel," he said happily. "There's a big sink hole over there, just the right size to make your car disappear forever. With some of Jean's clothes and other things in it, of course. That way, it shouldn't be too hard to make the cops think you and she ran away together, should it?"

He stood back, laughing down at them as they struggled helplessly to free themselves from the tape, their eyes bulging with silent terror.

"But first," he said, "I'm going to take you and my faithful little wife here over to the far side of the bayou and feed you to the fish." He took a knife from his pocket, snicked it open, and ran his thumb slowly along the edge of the gleaming blade. "Of course, before I drop you folks over the side I just might amuse myself with a little exhibition of plain and fancy carving."

He nodded to himself slowly, put the knife away, and sat down behind the wheel of the cruiser.

"I'm going to enjoy this," he said, grinning back at them as he leaned forward to insert his key in the ignition. "Yes, sir, folks—I'm going to get a real blast out of this."

WELCOME TO THE CLUB by Jack Ritchie

(*Concluded from page 118*)

of miles apart. But time passed and the simple truth is that our agents and informers are hard workers and get the promotions."

I sighed. "Unfortunately the fact still remains that Party Headquarters will expect a purge on the executive level."

Walters looked at me. "I've been thinking about that very thing, Turner."

I laughed lightly. "Perhaps the Bureau could select the one of us it considers the most expendable and actually sacrifice him for the good of—"

I stopped.

Walters had risen to shake my hand.

Oh, well . . .

At least now my neighbors speak to me.

by BILL PRONZINI

Death comes cheap, they say.
Murder—That comes high.

Retirement

DON LEHMAN was relaxing on the railed veranda of his cabin, smoking his pipe and watching the graceful silver thread of the river that wound its way through the redwoods in the valley below, when the knock sounded at the front door.

Grumbling at the interruption of his reverie, Lehman rose from the round wicker chair and

walked ponderously through the front room. He hadn't been expecting anyone this afternoon; the grocery boy had already made his daily delivery. He opened the door and looked at the tall, smiling man in the olive green suit standing there on the porch.

The man's name was David Reading, and it had been almost six years since they had seen one another.

Their eyes met for a long moment, and then Lehman stood aside wordlessly. Reading came inside.

Lehman closed the door quietly, turning. Reading's eyes were making a slow, appreciative circuit of the room.

He said, "Nice little place you've got here, Don."

"Yes," Lehman said. "It is."

"You've sure got the right idea," Reading told him. He was looking at one of the large framed woodcarvings that hung on the unvarnished redwood walls. "I've been thinking about something just like this when I retire, too."

Lehman's lined, sun-darkened face was stoic. "How did you find me, Dave?"

Reading pivoted away from the woodcarving. "You, of all people, shouldn't have to ask that."

"What do you want?"

"Do I have to want something?"

"You didn't come all the way up here to renew an old friendship."

"No, you're right," Reading said. "I didn't."

"Say what you've come to, Dave."

Reading faced him squarely. He was smiling.

"I won't hedge, Don," he said. "I need a favor."

Lehman relit his pipe, nodding. "I figured that as soon as I saw it was you."

"I'm in a spot," Reading said. "I wouldn't ask you if there was anybody else."

"I'm retired now, Dave," Lehman said, "You know that."

"Sure. But we were pretty good friends once. I thought maybe—"

"I can't help you, Dave."

"I'm not asking you to do this favor for nothing, you understand," Reading said. "I'll pay your standard price."

"I don't have a standard price any more."

"Hal—"

"Look, Dave," Lehman said, "when I retired that was the end of it. Retirement is the best time of a man's life, and I'm enjoying it more than I've ever enjoyed anything before. This place I've got here is one of a kind, and I don't want to leave it. Not even for one day. Can you understand that?"

"I can," Reading said, "but—"

Lehman crossed to where a small, portable bar held several types of bottles and glasses. "Drink, Dave?"

Reading nodded. "I could use one."

"You still take the same?"

"The same."

Lehman mixed a bourbon-seven for Reading and a small brandy for himself.

Reading drank deeply from his.

"Don," he said, "listen, this spot I'm in is kind of a bad one. There's a power struggle going on between two completely warring factions. You know what that means for the one that comes out on the short end."

"Yes," Lehman said. He drew on his pipe. "Two factions, you said? Yours and who else's?"

"Nick Tabor."

"Is he the favor you want?"

"Yes," Reading said slowly.

"Nick and I were friends once, too, you know."

"I know."

"Even if I agreed to come out of retirement, what made you think I'd consider Nick?"

"You worked for anybody who had your price in the old days," Reading said. "You never let personal feelings get involved."

Lehman sipped his brandy. "There are plenty of others you could go to."

"They couldn't get to Nick, not with the precautions he's taken," Reading said. "But you could, Hal. It wouldn't be any problem for you."

Lehman smiled thoughtfully. After a moment he said, "Suppose

we go out on the veranda and talk it over."

Reading's eyes brightened. "Then you'll do it?"

"We'll talk it over."

They went out onto the veranda. Lehman stood at the railing and looked down at the panorama below.

"What do you think of the view?" he asked.

Reading came up beside him. "It's nice, Don."

"The first time I saw this place, I fell in love with it," Lehman said. "It's completely isolated, not a soul within three and a half miles."

Reading nodded shortly, working on his drink.

"This veranda is built right out over the slope," Lehman said. "It's a drop of over five hundred feet. And there's nothing down there but wilderness, all the way to the river."

"Don, can't we talk about—"

"Sure, Dave, sure we can,"

Lehman said. He took a small step backward.

Reading was standing with his thighs touching the wood railing. Very gently, almost effortlessly, Lehman put the palm of his hand in the middle of Reading's back and pushed.

Reading's arms flailed as he felt himself being thrust forward. The glass dropped from his hand and rolled across the veranda. He tried to turn, to regain his balance, but it was too late.

The railing catapulted him over. He fell, turning over and over in the air as if in slow motion. He screamed all the way down, but there was no one there to hear it except Lehman, and the sound did not bother him at all.

Lehman stood looking down at the solid wall of muted greens and browns for a time. Then he turned and went into the front room to where the telephone sat on a table by the door. He took a card from his wallet and dialled a long distance number. He waited.

A soft voice said, "Hello?"

"Nick?"

"Yes?"

"This is Don Lehman."

"How are you, Don?"

"Just fine," Lehman said. "Nick, I've changed my mind about your proposition."

There was silence for a moment. Then the voice said, "That's good to hear. But I thought you wouldn't come out of retirement and leave your place up there."

"I don't have to," Lehman said. "My standard price was your offer, wasn't it?"

"Yes, ten thousand."

"Bring it up whenever you can," Lehman said. "There's no hurry. I'll explain then."

"All right, Hal."

Lehman hung up and returned to the veranda. He sat in his wicker chair and breathed deeply of the redolent air. He put his pipe between his teeth, chewing on the stem, and gently closed his eyes.

Within a matter of minutes, he was alseep.

FOR FASTER POSTAL SERVICE—USE ZIP CODE NUMBERS!
REMEMBER, ZIP NUMBERS ARE PART OF YOUR ADDRESS!
AVOID LAST MINUTE RUSH. MAIL EARLIER IN THE DAY!
IT'S MUCH QUICKER THAT WAY!

6 Gardners plus 1 Christie

PLUS 2 MORE NEW MYSTERIES ($33.85 in pub. editions) ALL for $1.00

as a new member

Thrill to tense courtroom battles, spellbinding action, baffling clues! You get six of Erle Stanley Gardner's best Perry Mason mysteries—in six full-size, full-length, hard-bound books. You also get Christie's latest thriller—PLUS 2 more new full-length mysteries in a big triple volume. These nine mysteries would cost $33.85 in the publishers' original editions—but you get all nine of them for only $1.00 as your introduction to the many advantages of membership in The Detective Book Club.

Out of the 300 or more new detective books that come out every year, the Club selects the very cream of the crop by outstanding authors like Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, Mignon G. Eberhart, John Creasey, and Van Wyck Mason. All these and many other famous authors have had their books selected by the Club. Many are members themselves.

Club selections are all newly published books. As a member, you can get three of them each month complete in one handsomely bound triple volume (a $10.00 to $13.85 value in publishers' editions) for only $3.39.

You do not have to take a volume every month. You receive a free copy of the Club's *Preview* which will fully describe all coming selections and you may reject any volume before or after receiving it. No money in advance; no membership fee. You may cancel membership at any time.

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
The Case of the Phantom Fortune
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
the case of the troubled trustee
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
THE CASE OF THE HORRIFIED HEIRS
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
THE CASE OF THE BEAUTIFUL BEGGAR
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
the case of the Queenly Contestant
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
THE CASE OF THE Worried Waitress

Mail Postcard for All 7 Volumes

Simply mail postcard promptly and we will send you at once the six complete Perry Mason thrillers—PLUS the Agatha Christie—PLUS the two other exciting mysteries described on the other side. But don't delay. Mail postcard now to:

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L.I., New York 11576

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW

•

FOR YOUR NINE MYSTERIES

SEND NO MONEY—JUST MAIL THIS COUPON

20A-313

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB, Roslyn, L.I., New York 11576 9-RW

Please enroll me as a member and send me at once the six full-length, hard-bound editions of Perry Mason thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-1 volume Club selection containing the new Agatha Christie and 2 other great mysteries. I enclose no money in advance; within a week after receiving my books, I will either return them and owe nothing, or keep all seven volumes, containing nine first-rate mystery stories, for the special new-member introductory price of only $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charges).

As a member, I am to receive advance descriptions of all future selections, but am not obligated to buy any. For each future triple volume I decide to keep, I will send you only $3.39 (plus a few cents mailing charges). I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership at any time. (Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)

Mr.)
Mrs. } _____
Miss)
(Please Print Plainly)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

A Royal Bounty from the King and Queen of Mystery

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

AGATHA CHRISTIE

PLUS 2 MORE

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
The Case of the Phantom Fortune
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
the case of the troubled trustee
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
THE CASE OF THE BEAUTIFUL BEGGAR
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
the case of the Queenly Contestant
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
THE CASE OF THE Worried Waitress

9 New Mysteries $1 AS A NEW MEMBER

GARDNER: Get 6 new Perry Masons in 6 full-length, hard-bound editions

1 The Case of the Queenly Contestant
An aging beauty queen involves Perry in a $2,000,000 estate . . . blackmail . . . and a locked-room murder.
(Pub. Ed. $3.95)

2 The Case of the Worried Waitress
Perry Mason's pretty client is charged with murder. And the only one who can save her is blind.
(Pub. Ed. $3.50)

3 The Case of the Beautiful Beggar
Who murdered Daphne? Perry can't figure it out. Then, Daphne seems to make a drastic recovery.
(Pub. Ed. $3.50)

4 The Case of the Troubled Trustee
Dutton was with Palmer the very hour Palmer died. Dutton's gun killed him. Can Perry ever save him now? (Pub. Ed. $3.50)

5 The Case of the Horrified Heirs
Perry Mason's client met Mrs. Trent only once. But a mutual "friend" wants to kill them both.
(Pub. Ed. $3.50)

6 The Case of the Phantom Fortune
Perry Mason is forced to defend himself when the D.A. accuses him of framing attempted murder!
(Pub. Ed. $3.50)

CHRISTIE:

Get her newest whodunit and 2 more new mysteries in a hefty triple volume

7 Endless Night by Agatha Christie
Everyone's after poor Ellie Rogers' millions. And someone's trying nonstop murder.
(Pub. Ed. $4.50)

8 The Bridge That Went Nowhere
by Robert L. Fish
Why was Brazil's newest bridge blown up? There's only one clue – a single radioactive boot!
(Pub. Ed. $3.95)

9 The Banker's Bones
by Margaret Scherf
A young girl survives a horrible desert ordeal—only to be blamed for robbery—and maybe murder.
(Pub. Ed. $3.95)

(See other side for complete details)

FIRST CLASS
PERMIT No. 7
Roslyn, N.Y.

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
No postage stamp necessary if mailed in the United States

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY

The Detective Book Club
Roslyn, L. I.
New York 11576